The CROSS-STITCH HEART and Other PLAYS

by

RACHEL FIELD

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BY RACHEL FIELD

SIX PLAYS. (*One-Act Plays*, including "Three Pills in a Bottle.") With a Foreword by Professor George P. Baker, Yale University. 12mo, $1.25

THE CROSS-STITCH HEART

AND OTHER PLAYS

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THE CROSS-STITCH HEART "GREASY LUCK"
THE NINE DAYS' QUEEN
"THE LONDONDERRY AIR" AT THE JUNCTION
"BARGAINS IN CATHAY"

BY
RACHEL FIELD
AUTHOR OF "SIX PLAYS"

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1927

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FOR

CLARE KUMMER

WHO MAKES MUSIC WHEREVER
SHE GOES

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THE CROSS-STITCH HEART

A SAMPLER FANTASY*

*Note:—Most of the verses in this play have been taken from old samplers, more or less freely adapted by me. A few have been written to conform as much as possible with the sentiments of the time. My thanks are due to the book of "American Samplers," published by the Massachusetts Society of the Colonial Dames of America.

CHARACTERS

The Sampler Mother
Adam
Rosetta
Man-of-the-World
Little Girl

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THE CROSS-STITCH HEART

Prologue

This is to be said before the curtain preferably by a little girl of twelve or younger in a costume of the time of our grandmother's, carrying a sampler in her hands upon which she works as she recites the following:

Little Girl. [*Speaking in precise and formal accents in keeping with the sentiments.*]

Parents and patrons of my age, I now present to you
This work, which did my hands engage and you shall shortly view.
I ask your counsel; seek your aid, and approbation too
And beg your blessing may descend on all the works I do.

[*She pauses, takes a few more stitches, and goes on in a trifle more conversational tone.*

My needle fine I've plied with skill
This length of canvas for to fill.
Behold a little world is there
All neatly measured to a square,
With cross-stitch flowers all in bloom
And willow weeping by a tomb;
With cross-stitch birds in cross-stitch boughs
Before a square-set cross-stitch house.
The people, too, I almost said,
In lives securely patternèd,
Move primly through th' appointed days
Seeking the straight and narrow ways
Of duty, grace and truth,
Yet smoothest patterns go awry,

Nothing is sure when Love comes by,
And even Cross-Stitch Hearts can beat
That Love should be so strange and sweet
Upon the lips of youth.

The curtains part upon a scene which should be as nearly like an old-fashioned sampler as possible. A back drop-curtain should be painted to represent a square cross-stitch house in the back centre, with a door cut directly in the middle through which the characters may go in and out. On the left (of audience) is a weeping willow tree, also painted on curtain to give the effect of one done in needlework, with very drooping, impossibly tapering branches. Near this is a marble tombstone, topped by a funeral urn. This should be made of canvas or some material so it may be placed forward a little under the tree and it should be strong enough to lean against. On the other side of the house is a stiff tree, preferably a flowering horse-chestnut, also painted on the curtain to look as if it were embroidered. In the foreground are stiff flowers, very much out of proportion and painted to resemble cross-stitch. Above the house is a conventionally drawn cloud upon which a motto has been worked in cross-stitch letters:

IMPROVE THY TIME
NOW IN THY PRIME

Blue ribbon bow-knots entwine it.

Since the whole effect of this scene is to look as quaint and like a sampler as possible, the more crude and out-of-drawing this curtain is, the better the illusion will be. Upon rise of curtain ADAM, *a youth of gloomy visage, dressed in conventional, old-fashioned clothes, is seated*

under the willow playing upon a small harp or lyre. His hands sweep the strings in exaggerated melancholy and he sings with serious relish.

ADAM. [*Singing.*]

The fairest flowers must decay,
Seek and find them while ye may,
Seize the moment, snatch the treasure,
Sober haste is wisdom's leisure.
Ev'ry living thing must die,
Even you and even I,
To lie 'neath tomb and willow-tree—
Even thee and even me.

While he is singing the SAMPLER MOTHER *enters from the house. She is majestic and primly dressed in billowing crinolines.*

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Looking about her, and calling.*] Rosetta! [*To* ADAM *with an impatient gesture.*] Not a sign of her, Adam, and I left her here with her sewing not an hour ago!

ADAM. [*Rising and pointing to a bag fallen on the grass by bench.*] Here is her work-bag, Madam, and her silks all of a snarl. [*Picks it up.*]

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Seating herself on the bench.*] Left for me to untangle as usual while she idles away her time dreaming and looking for dear knows who to come from dear knows where. [*She breaks off, feeling she has gone too far.*]

ADAM [*With a mild show of interest.*] But what could come? Nothing ever has.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Quickly.*] And nothing ever will, Adam, remember that! [*More apologetically.*] I beg your pardon if I seem to show unbecoming vehemence, but the responsibilities of rearing a daughter—and such a daughter as Rosetta!

ADAM. [*Agreeing.*] I share your anxieties, Madam. Indeed there are times when I tremble for her.

SAMPLER MOTHER. Firmness and patience, Adam. That is the only way to deal with vanity and waywardness. But I confess that ever since the day before yesterday I have felt great concern.

ADAM. [*Mystified.*] The day before yesterday?

SAMPLER MOTHER. Surely you cannot have observed the change that has come over her, Adam?

ADAM. I trust there is nothing amiss with Rosetta.

SAMPLER MOTHER. Would that I might answer "no," but truth compels me to state otherwise. It was for this I sent for you.

ADAM. [*Bowing formally.*] I am always at your service, Madam.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Solemnly.*] Adam, all is not well with Rosetta. She has not been herself for three days now. I am at a loss to account for this change in her unless you can offer some explanation.

ADAM. I, Madam? Indeed I am as mystified as yourself.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Thoughtfully.*] Then it is worse than I feared. It is not only her vanity, though I must confess that of late she has seemed too well aware of her own person—only yesterday I came upon her preening herself before her reflection in the garden-pool and this morning in the act of courtesying to her own shadow.

ADAM. Most unfortunate, but after all there is not so much actual harm in that.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Reprovingly.*] I wonder that you should countenance such actions after all my warnings to you both. Youth is the most dangerous time, Adam. Have you forgotten rule of conduct number four? [*She recites with great emphasis.*]

While beauty and pleasure and passion hold sway,
And folly and fashion would lure us away,
O, let not these phantoms our wishes engage,
Let us live so in youth that we blush not in age.

ADAM. [*Hastily.*] I have always tried to follow your instructions.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Sighing.*] If only Rosetta's conduct could be as much of a credit to me. But we must act for her good, Adam, and at once.

ADAM. [*Stupidly.*] How shall we act, Madam?

SAMPLER MOTHER. Have I not always impressed it upon you to:

Guard and protect the tender fair
From every worldly, flattering snare?

ADAM. [*Puzzled.*] And I have tried even though her ways often seemed very strange to me.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Shaking her head sadly.*] Lightness, Adam, that has ever been her besetting sin. Rosetta is far too light-minded—light-footed as well. I had hoped that care and correction would improve this blemish, but instead it seems to have been growing upon her, especially since the day before yesterday. [*Leaning toward him earnestly.*] Adam, you saw no one about? No one passed this way?

ADAM. No one, Madam, to my knowledge.

SAMPLER MOTHER. Good! I confess I have had little peace of mind of late fearing lest some man-of-the-world might cross her path.

ADAM. [*Reassuringly.*] That seems unlikely here.

SAMPLER MOTHER. But the most unlikely things are often the surest to happen, and when she talked in such familiar terms of—[*appears slightly embarrassed*] of passion and love and kisses— [*Apologetically.*] Forgive my mentioning such worldly weaknesses, Adam, but I must make you realize the seriousness of the situation. We must

not relax our watchfulness till you two are safely married.

ADAM. [*With a self-important air.*] Your confidence is gratifying to me.

SAMPLER MOTHER. I am convinced that you will make Rosetta an exemplary husband, but meantime we must think of some means of distracting her from such thoughts. As her future mate have you any suggestions to offer?

ADAM. No, Madam, but I shall give the matter my careful consideration.

SAMPLER MOTHER. Delay might be fatal, Adam. No, we must act to curb this tendency at once. [*Thoughtfully.*] I remember that on the occasion of my own dear lamented husband's proposal of marriage I was deeply moved not only by his words, but by some music he introduced into the conversation. Music is known to produce extraordinary effects, and one of Rosetta's temperament should be easily stirred.

ADAM. [*Rising.*] I will fetch my harp. [*He brings it over and begins twanging it mournfully.*]

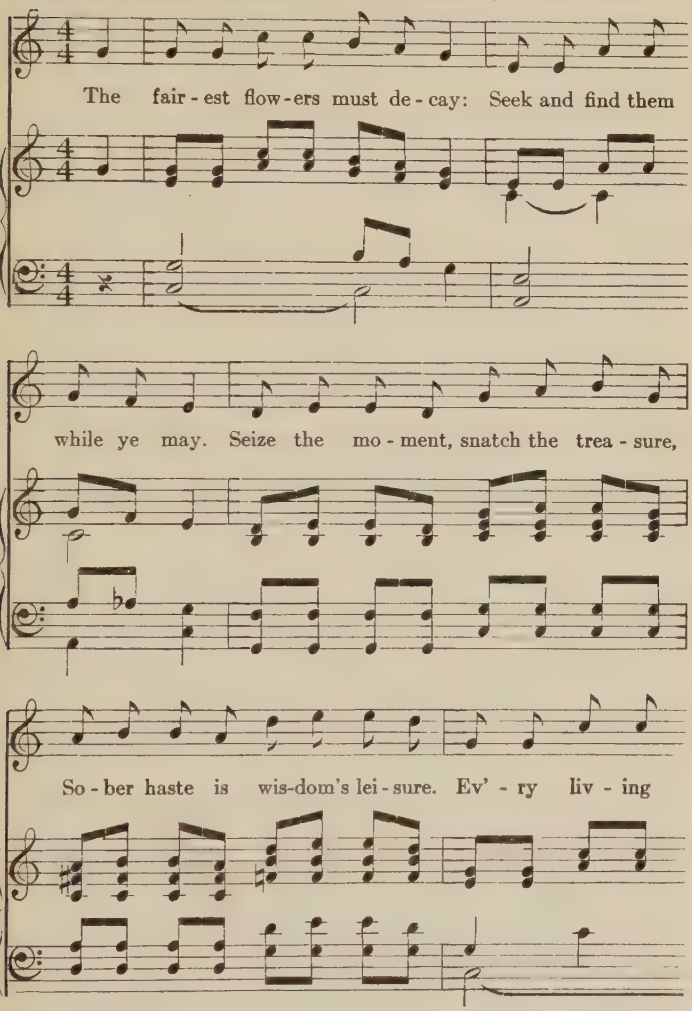
SAMPLER MOTHER. Something that points a proper moral, Adam, to arouse in her a sense of duty and resignation. I feel I can rely on your judgment.

ADAM. [*Seriously.*] Perhaps this might prove appropriate to the occasion. [*He sweeps the strings with exaggerated melancholy, accompanying his singing with many sighs and doleful head shakings.*]

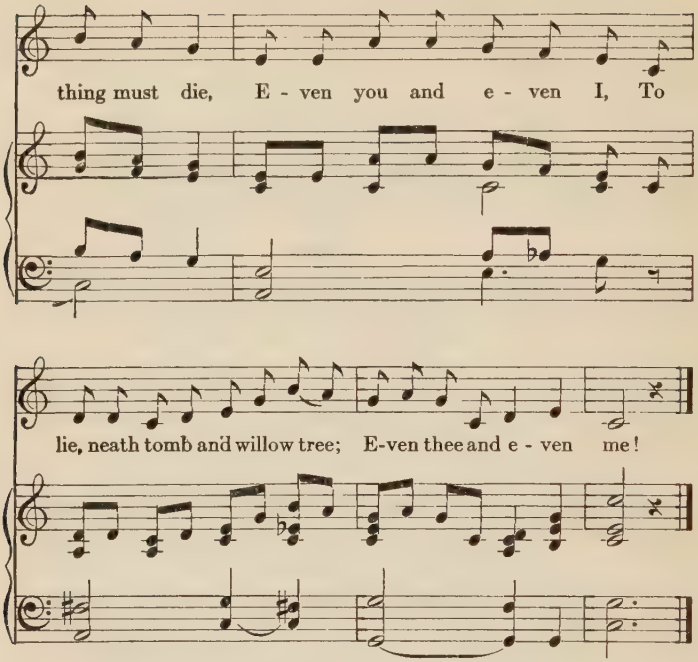
The fairest flowers must decay,
Seek and find them while ye may.
Seize the moment, snatch the treasure,
Sober haste is wisdom's leisure.
Ev'ry living thing must die,
Even you and even I,
To lie 'neath tomb and willow-tree—
Even thee and even me.

ADAM'S SONG

Simply, like an old hymn Music by Clare Kummer


The fair - est flow - ers must de - cay: Seek and find them
while ye may. Seize the mo - ment, snatch the trea - sure,
So - ber haste is wis-dom's lei - sure. Ev' - ry liv - ing

ADAM'S SONG—Concluded



[*He gives special emphasis to the last four lines.*

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*With approval as he pauses.*] Beautiful sentiments, Adam, so comforting—and how affectingly you point the moral.

ADAM. Praise from your lips is sweet, but if only Rosetta——

SAMPLER MOTHER. She cannot fail to be affected by them, but could you not compose still another verse, one that laid special emphasis upon the vanities?

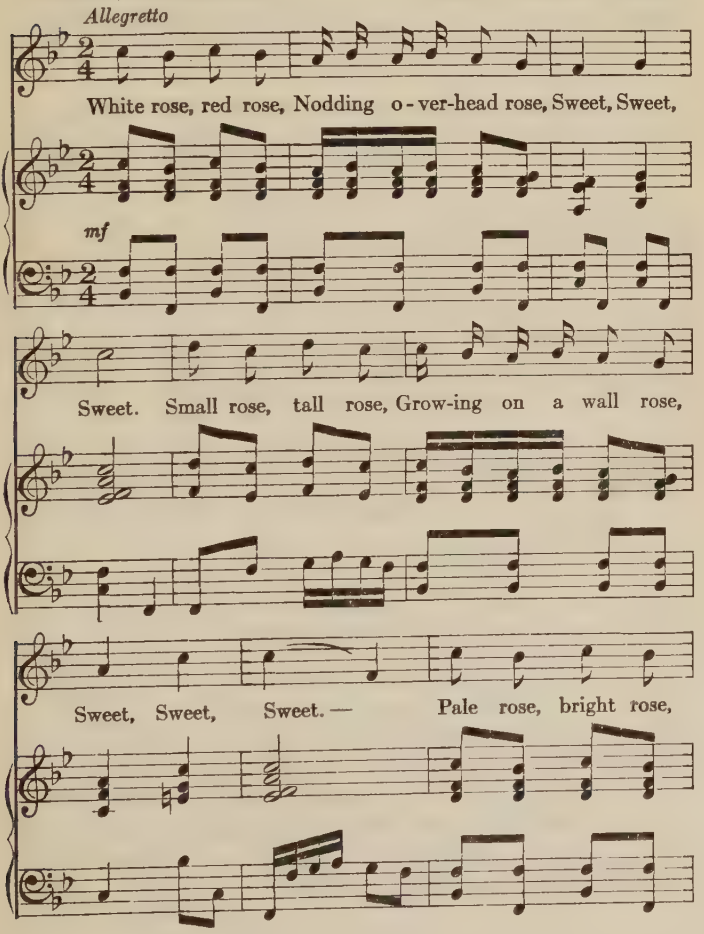
ADAM. [*Bowing.*] I will do my best. [*He takes up the harp and begins to pluck it again preparatory to more singing, when they are interrupted by off-stage singing in a*

high girl's voice. They both turn and look at one another significantly as it draws nearer.]

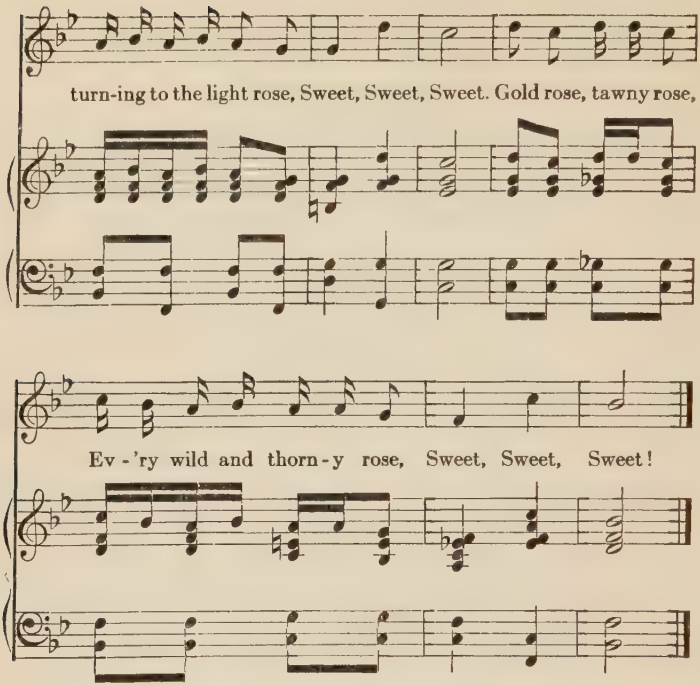
SAMPLER MOTHER. Rosetta, only listen to her.

ROSETTA. [*Singing.*]

ROSETTA'S SONG

Words by RACHEL FIELD Music by CLARE KUMMER

Allegretto
White rose, red rose, Nodding o-ver-head rose, Sweet, Sweet,
mf
Sweet. Small rose, tall rose, Grow-ing on a wall rose,
Sweet, Sweet, Sweet.— Pale rose, bright rose,

ROSETTA'S SONG—Concluded



White rose, red rose,
Nodding overhead rose—
Sweet, sweet, sweet.

Small rose, tall rose,
Growing on a wall rose—
Sweet, sweet, sweet.

[*Enter* ROSETTA, *young and pretty as an old-fashioned Valentine with curls, flounces and ribbons galore. Her dress is ruffled and billowing, low-necked and tight-waisted. Her feet are in little*

flat, black slippers with prim ankle-ribbons crossed over white stockings. She has filled her bonnet with roses and she carries this over her arm, gathering more as she comes and unaware of her MOTHER *and* ADAM *till the end of the song.*

Pale rose, bright rose,
Turning to the light rose—
Sweet, sweet, sweet.

Gold rose, tawny rose,
Every wild and thorny rose—
Sweet, sweet, sweet.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Reprovingly.*] Rosetta! Hush, I beg of you! [ROSETTA *stops short, the song still on her lips.*] Where you learn such light and unprofitable songs is beyond my comprehension.

ROSETTA. [*Dutiful, but also eager.*] Yes, Mamma, but I did not learn this. It came into my head while I was gathering the roses.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Firmly.*] Then see that you forget it at once and remember instead:

The pink will fade, the rose will wither,
But a virtuous mind goes on forever.

ROSETTA. Yes, Mamma, but if you please I cannot sing that very well.

SAMPLER MOTHER. It is not necessary for you to do so. You should have been sewing here, not taking the roses from their natural element. Remove them from your bonnet instantly. [ROSETTA *begins to do so reluctantly.*] Is that a rent I perceive in your dress? Dear, dear and in the front breadth of course.

ROSETTA. [*Eyeing it apologetically.*] It must have

caught on a rose thorn, but I will mend it so it will never show.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*With solemn emphasis.*] To hide a sin is not to undo it.

[*A book tumbles out of the hat as* ROSETTA *takes out the last rose. She stoops quickly to pick it up, but* ADAM *secures it first, peering at it curiously.*

ROSETTA. [*Instantly alert.*] That is mine, Adam, please give it to me at once.

ADAM. [*With mild interest.*] Why this is not your book of embroidery, or the "Manual of Manners and Morals for Young Ladies of Quality!" It is not like any book I ever saw— [*He begins slowly spelling out the title.*] "Love Will Have Its Own—A Romance."

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Overcome.*] Romance! Oh, that it should have come to this and from my own daughter! [*Beckoning* ADAM *to her.*] Adam, your arm. I feel I am about to swoon. [ADAM *drops the book and hurries to her side. She closes her eyes and leans limply against the bench.*]

ROSETTA. [*Securing the book again and pressing it close, also draws nearer.*] Please do not swoon, Mamma. It is such a lovely book; not at all like the "Manners and Morals" or the Motto one.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Still with closed eyes.*] Like them! I should think not! [*To* ADAM.] A little air, Adam, and I may be able to revive. [*He begins to fan her and she opens her eyes.*] That is better. [*To* ROSETTA.] And now, explain to me, pray how you came into the possession of such a scandalous volume? Who gave it to you? Answer me at once!

ROSETTA. [*Still clinging to the book.*] No one, Mamma, I found it lying here on this bench day before yesterday.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Giving* ADAM *a significant look.*] The day before yesterday. You see, it is as I told you. I knew she must have fallen under some evil worldly spell.

ROSETTA. [*Earnestly.*] But it is beautiful, Mamma, even the parts that I do not understand. Only listen to this— [*She opens the book and begins to read:*] "The moon was high in the heavens when the lovers met once more by the ruined mill. 'Rudolfo, my beloved, I have been true since the day your kiss first awakened me,' breathed Flora in ecstasy. 'My own,' whispered Rudolfo pressing her to him passiona——"

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Interrupting sharply.*] Rosetta! Never let me hear that word upon your lips! Close the book instantly and give it to me. [*She takes it from her firmly.*]

ROSETTA. [*Sighing.*] You never told me about kisses, Mamma, and hearts. They seem to be so very important. [*Thoughtfully.*] I wonder if it's true that they can do all those things the books says?

SAMPLER MOTHER. It is *not* true, Rosetta. I have told you all that it is good and necessary for you to know. Duty, obedience and modesty—these are the only qualities with which you need concern yourself at present. [*To* ADAM.] It seems to me that the time is opportune to acquaint her with the sentiments we were so lately discussing.

ADAM. [*Acquiescing.*] As you think best, Madam. The knowledge may bring her to her senses.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Motioning* ROSETTA *to the bench.*] Seat yourself between us, Rosetta. No, do not sniff the roses. [*She makes her drop them on the ground.*] Now, have I your complete attention?

ROSETTA. Yes, Mamma.

SAMPLER MOTHER. As your Mother and Adam's guard-

ian, I have always tried to lead you both into the ways of duty and wisdom. Now it is high time that you and Adam faced the most serious and awe-inspiring period of your lives since you have attained years of discretion.

ROSETTA. Sometimes I do not feel so sure that I have. Do you always feel sure, Adam?

ADAM. [*Reprovingly.*] We must not doubt what your mother tells us is true.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Continuing her discourse.*] No pains have been spared to help you along the slippery path of youth or to snatch your feet from the snares and pitfalls into which they would have fallen.

ROSETTA [*Looking at her feet with new interest.*] Oh, *would* they?

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Admonishingly.*] Rosetta, you forget yourself!

ROSETTA. [*With a little sigh.*] Oh, how I wish I could sometimes.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Going on with wounded dignity.*] If I may be allowed to proceed without further interruption. [*Clearing her throat impressively and pausing solemnly as she looks from one to the other.*] After due deliberation I am convinced that the time is ripe for you to enter into the estate of matrimony. [*Turning to* ROSETTA.] In short, that you and Adam should be married, my dear. You recall the chapter on marriage in "Virtue's Garland," do you not?

ROSETTA. [*Without enthusiasm.*] Oh, yes, I remember it, Mamma. It was so very long. [*To* ADAM.] Do you think it would be nice for us to be married, Adam?

ADAM. [*Formally.*] I confess that such a prospect is not distasteful to me.

ROSETTA. I am glad of that, but the other book— [*she*

eyes it wistfully as it lies in her mother's lap] said such very different things from "Virtue's Garland."

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Very pompously.*] Marriage is a state not to be lightly assumed.

ROSETTA. And I do not seem to understand about Love.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Unbending a little.*] You do not need to if you love Adam. And you do love him, do you not, Rosetta?

ROSETTA. [*Hesitating.*] I think so, except sometimes when he sings too much.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Frowning.*] It is hardly your place to criticize Adam after what has so recently occurred [*To* ADAM.] Happy the mother who can gain so dutiful a son. I have not reared you in vain.

ADAM. It will be my aim to merit your approbation and Rosetta's.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Rising, gathering up her work and the book.*] Now that you have both signified your honorable intentions, it is only fitting and proper that I should withdraw. There will no doubt be much that you will wish to say to one another in private.

ROSETTA. [*All interest.*] Oh, do you think there will be?

SAMPLER MOTHER. Remember you are betrothed now and let your actions prove that you realize your new responsibilities.

ROSETTA. [*Mechanically.*] Yes, Mamma.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*To* ADAM *as she turns to re-enter the house.*] What a relief to feel she is safe in your hands and not a prey to some man-of-the-world, but we must not relax our vigilance.

[*Exit the* SAMPLER MOTHER. ROSETTA *and* ADAM *left alone make no signs of ardent affection.* ROSETTA *is the first to break the silence.*

ROSETTA. Have you thought of something to say, Adam? I cannot seem to.

ADAM. [*Stolidly.*] Nor I, Rosetta, but we are betrothed.

ROSETTA. I suppose we must be, but it seems very strange we should feel no different from before.

ADAM. Why should one?

ROSETTA. But the book said—so many things. [*Earnestly.*] Perhaps if you asked Mamma, Adam, she would let you read it, and then you could explain to me.

ADAM. I am quite content without it. Why need we feel more than this?

ROSETTA. [*Thoughtfully.*] I do not know, and yet—something tells me that we should. [*She regards him hopefully.*] Can you think of nothing to do about it?

ADAM. [*Taking up his harp.*] I could sing you the second verse of my song.

ROSETTA. [*Put out.*] That is not what I meant at all. What is the good of our being betrothed if you act just as you did before?

ADAM. [*Unheeding as he plucks the strings.*] I have composed this one especially for you, Rosetta, I am sure you will find it helpful. [*He sings dolefully to the same tune.*]

Aim not in gaudy dress to shine,
Let modesty thy form entwine.
Reflect how brief must be thy stay,
How vain to deck a piece of clay.
Ev'ry living thing must die,
Even you and even I,
To lie 'neath tomb and willow-tree—
Even thee and even me.

ROSETTA. [*Pouting.*] I do not like your song, Adam

ADAM. [*Virtuously.*] Most unfortunate, for you could benefit by it greatly, Rosetta. [*He rises and goes over to the urn and the willow-tree, settling himself with his back to the tombstone.*] Perhaps the third verse may please you better. [*He continues singing.*]

All our gaiety is vain,
All our laughter is but pain.
Life is short, the wings of Time
Bear away our earthly prime—
Ev'ry living thing must die,
Even you and even I,
To lie 'neath tomb and willow-tree—
Even thee and even me.

[*As he sings* ROSETTA *shows plainly her boredom and disappointment. She picks up her work-bag and begins sewing a little half-heartedly. While she is bending over this, and* ADAM *under the willow is completely absorbed in his song, a young man enters from the other side of the stage. The young man is dressed elegantly in the fashion of the period (about* 1830 *or so) with tight-fitting trousers, bright blue or maroon coat with swallow-tails, high stock and flowery waistcoat. He carries a high beaver hat in one hand and comes so quietly that* ROSETTA, *bending over her sewing, does not look up till he speaks.*

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Politely, but without* ADAM'S *stilted formality.*] I am sorry to disturb you, but I came here looking for some lost property of mine.

ROSETTA. [*Starting up and studying him eagerly.*] Oh, oh, then it was yours and you must be—Oh, *are* you a Man-of-the-World?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Bowing.*] I hope so—at least I used to be before I lost my way and took the wrong turn somewhere. What I may have become now, who knows?

ROSETTA. [*Calling softly.*] Adam, Adam, come and see. Here is a Man-of-the-World.

[ADAM *is still too absorbed twanging his harp to notice. He no longer sings, but sweeps the strings in long sad chords.*

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Quickly.*] Oh, I beg you not to disturb him. Poor fellow, he feels his grief so deeply.

ROSETTA. [*Opening her eyes wide in astonishment.*] But he always sings like that—every day over and over the same.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. He must have loved the person buried there very much to sing such a sad song.

ROSETTA. [*Shaking her head.*] Adam? Why, no, but it has to be sad because he sings it there with the urn and the weeping willow.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Incredulously.*] Do you mean to tell me he doesn't know whose tomb it is?

ROSETTA. We never thought to ask. You see it has always been there, ever since I can remember and a tomb is just a tomb, after all. But I will ask Mamma if you wish.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. So you have a Mamma?

ROSETTA. Oh, yes, we live in that house there [*she nods toward the house*], and so does Adam. [*In pleasantly conversational tones.*] Adam and I are going to be married.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Bowing again.*] My congratulations to Adam. [*Looking toward the willow he discovers that* ADAM *has fallen asleep, so he goes on with a note of amusement in his voice.*] He seems to be rather overcome by his own good fortune.

ROSETTA. [*Explaining seriously.*] Adam always takes

a nap after he has finished singing his song. I am sure he would have stayed awake though if he had seen you.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Oh, perhaps not. However, I thank you for thinking he might. [*There is a slight pause while he seats himself on the bench beside her.*] You have not told me your name.

ROSETTA. [*Simply.*] Rosetta.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Very pretty. [*He stoops and gathers up one of the roses from beside the bench, playing with it as he talks.*] And very appropriate too. Now if only you were growing on one of these bushes I could pick you.

ROSETTA. [*Smiling.*] But then I should have thorns.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Well, I should pick you just the same, for you are prettier than any rose I ever saw.

ROSETTA. [*Shyly.*] How nice! Adam never told me that. [*She darts a quick look toward the house.*] But Mamma would not like it. She would be sure to make me say rule number sixteen over twenty times.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Smiling at her.*] Wouldn't saying it once for me be as good?

ROSETTA. [*Seriously.*] Perhaps it might be. [*She begins to recite primly and in sing-song.*]

I may not steal the roses' hue
To decorate my face,
But the sweet breath of modesty
Will lend an equal grace.
Now in the opening Spring of Life
Good deeds may also bloom,
And budding virtues in my breast
Yield up the best perfume.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Curiously.*] You don't believe that, do you?

ROSETTA. [*Surprised.*] Why I never thought before—perhaps I don't. [*A little frightened at her own audacity.*] Would it be very wicked if I didn't?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Earnestly.*] It would be very wicked if you did, Rosetta.

ROSETTA. [*Relieved.*] Oh, I am so glad. I would rather not. I like my song about the roses better. Shall I sing it for you? [*She sings the "White-Rose, Red-Rose" song once more, looking up eagerly at him as she finishes.*] Do you like it, Man-of-the-World?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. I never heard a sweeter.

ROSETTA. There would have been more if they had not stopped me. [*Sighing.*] I wish Adam liked it. But it is not sad enough to please him, and he and Mamma say it is light and unprofitable because it has no moral.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Oh, that's what they say, is it? They prefer to weep and wail about a tomb when they do not even know who's under it and they call it unprofitable for you to sing about the roses! [*Looking all about.*] Tell me is it always like this here—so prim and precise and all of a pattern?

ROSETTA. [*Wonderingly.*] But how else should it be? [*Suddenly leaning toward him half fearfully.*] You make me wish it were not so. You make me feel suddenly very full of wishes, the way that book did—the one you left that Mamma took away from me.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Oh, so she took it away from you? [*Curiously.*] Did you like my book?

ROSETTA. [*Sighing.*] So very much—that was why she took it. [*Even more earnestly.*] Only I didn't understand all the part about Love in it.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Didn't you? But you and Adam, do you love each other very much?

ROSETTA. We are betrothed, just this morning.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. But I asked you if you loved each other?

ROSETTA. [*Puzzled.*] Isn't that the same thing?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Amused.*] Not necessarily.

ROSETTA. Oh, dear, now you are beginning to use long words like the motto book.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Doesn't your Heart tell you things—about love for instance?

ROSETTA. But that is just what I don't understand. What does it mean—this thing you and the book call "A Heart?"

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Incredulously.*] Can it be possible I have lost my hearing?

ROSETTA. Is it pretty and can it sing?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Some Hearts are like that. I think very likely yours must be.

ROSETTA. Oh, do you think so? [*Practically.*] Where is it?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Amazed.*] Don't you know? [*She shakes her head.*] Surely you would know if you had one. People always do. Besides there is only one place to keep them. Here, let me see.

[He draws nearer to her on the bench, bends down and presses his ear to her left side. There is a tense moment as he listens and she stares out eagerly over his bent head. Then he lifts his face to hers and gives a little head shake.

ROSETTA. [*Sadly.*] Are you quite sure I have no Heart?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Quite sure, Rosetta, there was not a sound.

ROSETTA. [*Timidly.*] Could I—Would you let me hear yours?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Certainly. Here, put your ear very close.

[*He draws her to him and she presses her head close to his left side. Half unconsciously he fingers her curls, while she listens, her face all rapt intentness.*

ROSETTA. How strange and wonderful! I think I should never tire of hearing it.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Sometimes one does, though. Still, I can't imagine being without mine. I knew there was something unnatural about this place—so stiff and straight and formal. It's because nothing has a Heart here.

ROSETTA. [*Turning away.*] That is sadder than Adam's song and all the mottos in "Virtue's Garland."

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. I do not care about Adam, only it's sad for you—imagine looking as you do and being betrothed and yet never knowing Love, for one can't know Love if one hasn't a Heart.

ROSETTA. Can't one? I want to so much. And I ought to love Adam if we're going to be married, oughtn't I?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Yes, it would be better if you could.

ROSETTA. Perhaps if you told me what Hearts are like, I might be able to make one.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. You never could. People in the World are all born with theirs, deep inside themselves. Of course they vary, some are big and some little. They grow and change, get heavy or light as the case may be. Sometimes they have even been known to break. Hearts aren't always very strong, you see.

ROSETTA. I would take very good care of mine if only I had one.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Perhaps you are better off without. You will never know how a Heart can ache.

ROSETTA. [*Persistently.*] Show me what they are like. Here, with this little stick in the earth.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Humoring her.*] About so big, and rounded—here and here. [*He bends down and draws at their feet.*] And now to a point—see. And red, much redder than the reddest rose you ever saw.

ROSETTA. [*Staring down at the sketch.*] Round and pointed and very red. [*With sudden inspiration.*] I mean to make one for myself and you must help me, Man-of-the-World. [*She seizes her work-bag and begins to take out her sewing things.*]

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Half humorous, half pitying.*] But what could you possibly make a Heart of, Rosetta?

ROSETTA. [*Already busily at work with needle and thread.*] I have my canvas and silks and needles and I'll take the finest stitches and cross them all—so! [*She shows him how in pleased excitement.*] It will be just as you say—round and pointed and very red.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. A Cross-Stitch Heart! Oh, Rosetta, who but you would have thought of such a thing!

ROSETTA. [*Sewing with happy assurance.*] I must be careful to have it right. [*She compares her work with his sketch on the ground.*] Rounded here and a little more pointed. I mustn't make any mistake if I'm going to wear it for the rest of my life. Perhaps I shall make Adam one, too.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*A little put out.*] Can't you forget him for a little?

ROSETTA. [*Surprised.*] But it is because of Adam that I need it. You said so yourself just now. [*Happily.*] Oh, it will be wonderful to love him. Shall we feel the way those two in your book did?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. How can I tell?

ROSETTA. You will help me put it on, won't you?

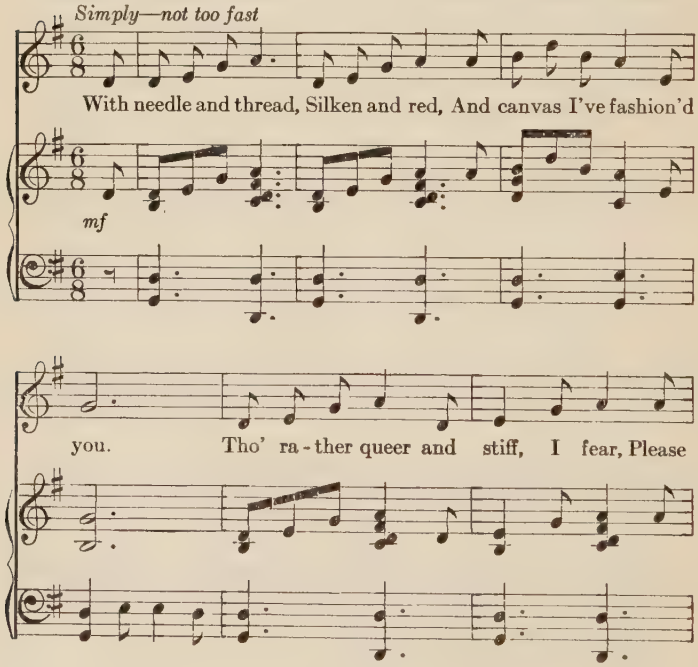
MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Grudgingly.*] I suppose I must. It is only right that you should love Adam since you are to marry him. [*Bending over her work.*] A few more stitches there, it is not round enough. Such a sharp point would never do for a Heart.

[ROSETTA *goes on sewing painstakingly under his directions. Presently she begins to sing, her voice full of happy excitement.*

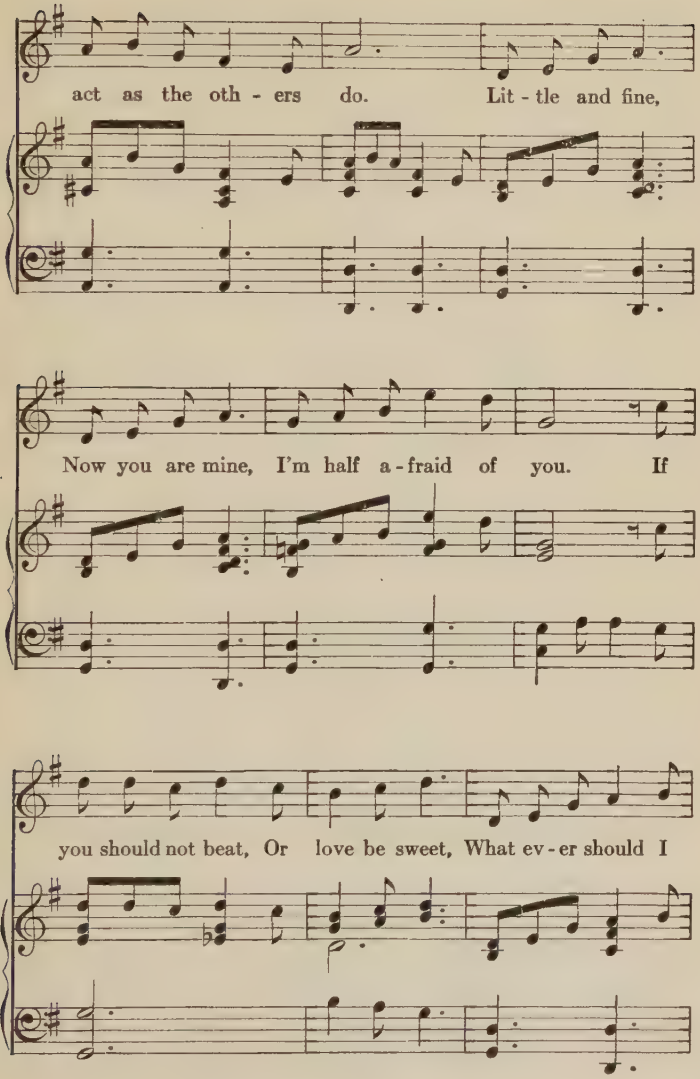
ROSETTA. [*Singing.*]

SEWING SONG

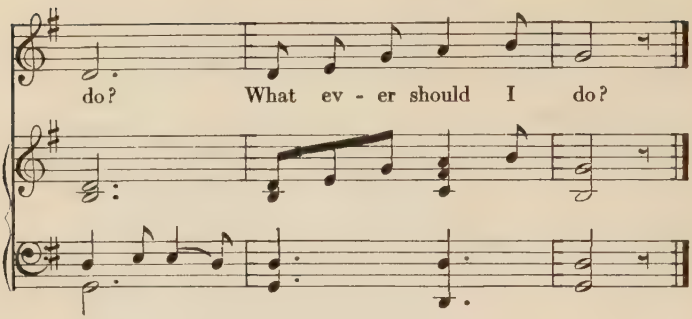
Words by RACHEL FIELD Music by CLARE KUMMER


Simply—not too fast
With needle and thread, Silken and red, And canvas I've fashion'd
mf
you. Tho' ra - ther queer and stiff, I fear, Please

SEWING SONG—Continued


act as the oth - ers do. Lit - tle and fine,
Now you are mine, I'm half a - fraid of you. If
you should not beat, Or love be sweet, What ev - er should I

SEWING SONG—Concluded



With needle and thread
Silken and red,
And canvas I've fashioned you,
Though rather queer
And stiff, I fear,
Please act as the others do.
Little and fine,
Now you are mine
I am half afraid of you,
If you should not beat,
Or Love be sweet—
Whatever should I do?
Whatever should I do?

[*After she has finished singing she breaks her thread, draws a deep breath of awed satisfaction and, taking her scissors, cuts the Heart out carefully.*]

ROSETTA. [*Holding the Heart out.*] There! Now all I have to do is put it on and then—and then— [*She breaks off excitedly and holds the Heart to her right side.*]

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Taking it from her firmly.*] No, no, Rosetta, it would never do to put it there! [*Humoring her as if she were a child.*] A Heart in the wrong

place might make you a great deal of trouble. [*He slips his arm about her, drawing her to him.*] I should almost advise you not to bother with a Heart, my dear, you are so very sweet without one.

[*He is about to kiss her, but with a glance toward the sleeping* ADAM *under the willow-tree, he restrains himself with a sigh.*

ROSETTA. [*Looking up into his face wonderingly.*] How strange! Your Heart—it sounded so loud and quick just now!

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Shaking off his own feelings.*] Sit very still then, while I help you put it on. I shall try not to hurt you, but I warn you, you may feel a sharp pain.

ROSETTA. [*Softly.*] I shall not mind even if it hurts me very much.

[*The* MAN-OF-THE-WORLD *pins the Heart on* ROSETTA'S *left side with the greatest care. Once or twice she winces and gives a little stifled cry.*

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Looking up.*] I am sorry if I pricked you, Rosetta.

ROSETTA. [*Bravely.*] It is nothing. Pray go on.

[*Just as he is finishing the task, the* SAMPLER MOTHER *is seen approaching from the house. She pauses in the doorway and surveys the absorbed pair with horrified amazement, lifting her hands aloft to Heaven.*

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*His arm still about* ROSETTA.] There, it is done.

ROSETTA. [*Lifting her face to his.*] Oh, thank you, Man-of-the-World. [*He draws her closer to him.*]

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Regaining her speech and hurrying toward them.*] Sir, remove your hands from my daughter instantly! [*To* ROSETTA *who has hastily covered her Heart with her hands.*] What is the meaning of this dis-

graceful attitude in which I find you? In the arms of a strange man! I would not have believed such a thing if I had not witnessed it with my own eyes! What possible explanation can you offer?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Rising and speaking with quiet assurance.*] Rosetta has been learning the language of the human Heart.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Icily.*] And who gave you permission to teach her, answer me that?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. She did. Rosetta herself.

SAMPLER MOTHER. A likely story! And suppose she did? Are you devoid of all honor that you should take advantage of her youth and innocence?

ROSETTA. But Mamma, he lost his way. He came looking for that book you took away from me.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*To* MAN-OF-THE-WORLD.] That is no excuse. You should certainly have knocked on our door and asked for guidance, not fallen into conversation with a young lady to whom you had not been properly presented. Have you no regard for the proprieties?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Polite, but firm.*] For my rudeness I beg a thousand pardons, but for my words to your daughter and for what you saw just now, I make no apology.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Furious.*] This is preposterous! Adam! Adam!

[*She begins to call loudly, looking all about.*

ROSETTA. [*Pointing.*] If you please, Adam went to sleep under the willow.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Annoyed at first.*] A fine time for him to take his nap! [*Then quickly defending him for* ROSETTA'S *benefit.*] But he could not guess that his future wife would conduct herself in so unseemly a manner!

[*Calling again.*] Adam, come here at once! [ADAM *half rouses himself, then slumps back into his old position sleepily.* SAMPLER MOTHER, *gathering all her forces to address* the MAN-OF-THE-WORLD.] And you, Sir, out of my garden this moment! Will you withdraw peaceably or will it be necessary to oust you by force?

ROSETTA. [*Timidly.*] But please, Mamma, he's doing no harm. Just because he is a Man-of-the-World——

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Breaking in scandalized.*] Oh, that I should hear such words from your lips! A Man-of-the-World, oh!

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. And not ashamed to be, Madam. It may not be laid out as carefully as this garden of yours —it isn't all prim flowers and clipped trees and urns and mottos, but the people there know what it means to feel. They have Hearts and they're not afraid of Love, not even when it hurts them terribly.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Very angry.*] Not another word! Go!

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Since you are so pressing. [*Bowing.*] I cannot perhaps rival Adam for swiftness of action or wits. [*As he turns to go.*] Farewell, Rosetta, I regret that our conversation should have been so rudely interrupted.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*As* ROSETTA *starts to speak.*] No, do not answer him, Rosetta, things have gone too far between you already. [*To* ADAM, *who has now wakened sufficiently to sit up, yawning and rubbing his eyes.*] Come here, Adam, it is high time you roused yourself!

ADAM. [*Coming forward sleepily.*] What is the trouble?

SAMPLER MOTHER. Trouble indeed. With Rosetta compromised for life under your very nose! [*As the* MAN-OF-THE-WORLD *still lingers.*] Sir, remove yourself in-

stantly. Adam, pray accompany him to the road, and do not return till you have seen him well out of sight. [ADAM *follows the* MAN-OF-THE-WORLD *out. The latter tries to look back at* ROSETTA, *but the* SAMPLER MOTHER *plants herself between them. After the two men have gone she seats herself on the bench, while* ROSETTA *stands miserably near by, her hands still over her Heart and her eyes staring in the direction in which the* MAN-OF-THE-*World has gone.*] Rosetta, mere words are inadequate to express my emotions at what has so recently occurred. What mother would not be prostrated with grief and humiliation?

ROSETTA. [*A little absently.*] I am sorry, Mamma, but I did not know there was anything wrong——

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Lifting her eyes to heaven.*] Nothing wrong! To talk brazenly with a Man-of-the-World! To be discovered in his arms! [*She shudders expressively.*]

ROSETTA. [*Softly to herself.*] It was good to be there and to feel his Heart.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Shocked.*] Hush, have you no sense of shame, no modesty?

ROSETTA. [*Still under the spell.*] I could hear it beat and when he told me about Love——

SAMPLER MOTHER. Rosetta! The less you mention Hearts and Love and—and other human weaknesses at this crisis in your life the better.

ROSETTA. But I must speak of them, Mamma.

SAMPLER MOTHER. Now you are defying me—my own daughter. Though cut to the quick by such ungratefulness, I will not relinquish my duty. I cannot stand by and see my only child swept into the fell clutch of folly and insidious passion without lifting a hand to save her. [*She takes out a small book from her bag.*] Had you but recalled rule of conduct number twelve, this deplorable lapse

might have been prevented, but though that is now impossible still it may serve to point out the gravity of your late indiscretion.

ROSETTA. [*Faintly.*] Yes, Mamma.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Handing her the book.*] You may read aloud the verses under the section entitled "Woman's Honor." Enunciate clearly and above all try to think of the meaning of the words as applied to your own conduct.

ROSETTA. [*Reading dutifully.*]

> The Traveller if he chance to stray
> May turn uncensored on his way;
> Polluted streams again be pure;
> The gravest ills admit a cure;
> But Woman, no redemption knows—
> The wounds of honor never close.

SAMPLER MOTHER. I am not fully convinced that you understand its significance even now. Read it through to yourself again, and think, Rosetta, think of your light and wanton behavior. [*Here* ADAM *returns and the* SAMPLER MOTHER *turns to re-enter the house.*] I go to resume my arrangements for your marriage. After what has taken place here this afternoon it is best that you and Adam should be united at once. Adam, I leave her in your charge. [*Turning back.*] You may resume your sewing now, Rosetta.

ROSETTA. [*Exchanging the book for her work, she seats herself so that the Heart does not show.*] Yes, Mamma.

SAMPLER MOTHER. Through diligence alone can you hope to efface the memory of this recent disgrace. You remember how beautifully rule number seven points that out— [*Again quoting with serious relish.*]

> The industrious bee extracts from ev'ry flower
> Its fragrant sweets and mild, balsamic power.

By her example taught, enrich thy mind,
Improve kind Nature's gifts, by sense refined.
Be thou the honeycomb in whom may dwell
Each mental sweet, nor leave one vacant cell.

ROSETTA. [*Resignedly.*] Yes, Mamma.

[*Exit the* SAMPLER MOTHER. ROSETTA *sews half-heartedly while* ADAM *seats himself on the bench beside her. After a pause* ROSETTA *speaks thoughtfully.*

I wonder if the bees mind, Adam?

ADAM. Mind what, Rosetta?

ROSETTA. Being an example in rule number seven.

ADAM. [*Seriously.*] Rosetta, I am forced to agree with your mother that you possess a singularly light and frivolous mind. But I shall do my utmost to improve it when we are married.

ROSETTA. [*Sighing.*] I wish you were more like a Man-of-the-World, Adam. He talked about my hair and my eyes and my lips, not a word about my mind and wanting to improve it.

ADAM. [*Self-righteously.*] You should be more grateful for my efforts; it is not every husband who would be so charitable.

ROSETTA. But you are not my husband yet.

ADAM. [*Gravely.*] You wish me to be, do you not?

ROSETTA. [*Upset.*] It is so hard to say. Before he came it was different. I did not know about Hearts then, you see.

ADAM. I must beg that you refrain from mentioning this painful subject again.

ROSETTA. But I shall go on thinking of it, just the same.

ADAM. [*Helpfully.*] Try repeating all the rules you can remember from the motto book.

ROSETTA. [*With sudden spirit.*] I am tired of the motto book and all its rules! I wish I need never look at it again! [*She catches it up.*]

ADAM. [*Shocked.*] Rosetta, think what you are saying!

ROSETTA. [*With more vehemence.*] And I do not want to think! I want to forget all about duty and propriety and industrious bees and rules of conduct—there!

[*She flings the motto book from her before* ADAM'S *scandalized gaze. He goes dutifully over to where it has fallen and picks it up.*

ADAM. [*Returning with it to her.*] Are you indisposed, Rosetta? I cannot otherwise account for your actions.

ROSETTA. [*Very earnest and eager.*] Adam, please don't scold me. Come closer and see what I have to show you.

[*As he does so she takes her hand away from her left side and shows him the Cross-Stitch Heart. He stares at it curiously, and with disapproval.*

ADAM. What is it?

ROSETTA. [*Happily.*] It's a Heart, Adam. My very own Heart that I made all myself.

ADAM. [*Critically.*] It is not much to look at and it interferes with the pattern of your dress. I would take it off at once if I were you.

ROSETTA. [*Ecstatically.*] Oh, but you don't know what it means—what it can do. It will make me love you, Adam, the way he said people in the World do.

ADAM. [*Reprovingly.*] Try not to talk so much of the World—

The World is wicked, gay and vain,
Where sins abound and follies reign!

ROSETTA. [*Taking him up quickly.*]

With Love for all the people in it,
I wish that I were there this minute!

ADAM. [*Scandalized.*] Rosetta!

ROSETTA. [*Vehemently.*] I do! I do! [*Drawing closer and holding her face up to his with suppressed excitement and anxiety.*] Kiss me, Adam, and then I shall know.

ADAM. [*Hesitating.*] Know what?

ROSETTA. In the book that was how it began. Hold me very close, and now put your lips against mine. [*He complies willingly, but clumsily and she stops and directs him.*] No, no, like this. [*She pulls his arm tighter about her, lifting up her face to his, trying not to be disheartened by his awkwardness and lack of enthusiasm. He kisses her in a perfectly polite, perfunctory way. She shows her disappointment, but refuses to give up at once.*] Once more, Adam. [*At the failure of this second experiment in affection,* ROSETTA *droops visibly. Finally turning from* ADAM *she leans her head on the bench and cries.*]

ADAM. [*Mildly puzzled by the whole performance.*] What is the matter, Rosetta? I did as you directed me.

ROSETTA. [*Crying forlornly.*] Yes, yes, and it was no use. I felt nothing—nothing at all.

ADAM. [*Still puzzled.*] What did you expect to feel?

ROSETTA. Love. [*Between her sobs.*] And I made it exactly as he said—round and pointed and very red. I crossed all the little stitches so carefully. I wanted to love you the way the people in the World do, but it's no use.

ADAM. [*Trying to comfort her.*] Let this be a lesson to you in the future, Rosetta. The ways of the World are not for you.

ROSETTA. That is why I am crying.

[ADAM *looks on at her tears in mild bewilderment.*

ADAM. Pray compose yourself, my dear. [*With a happy inspiration.*] I will go into the house and fetch you "Manners and Morals for Young Ladies of Quality." [*He starts to go into the house but turns to add.*] And as your future husband I must request that you remove this [*pointing to the Heart*], this superfluous decoration.

ROSETTA. [*With a resigned sigh.*] Very well, Adam.

ADAM. [*About to enter the house.*] And let us both endeavor to forget this unfortunate affair.

ROSETTA. [*Wiping her eyes.*] Yes, Adam, I will try. [*She sighs deeply and looks down at her Heart.*] Oh, my poor Heart, it's not your fault that you cannot feel. I might have known I could not make a real one, so I will take you off, and hide you away in the bottom of my workbag. I will try and forget all about you and be fond of Adam even when he sings.

[*She lifts up her hands resolutely to remove the Heart, and as she does so, the* MAN-OF-THE-WORLD *reappears and hurries to her.*

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Rosetta!

ROSETTA. [*Staring up at him incredulously.*] Why, it's you, Man-of-the-World! I thought I should never see you again.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. I had to come back, Rosetta. I couldn't forget you.

ROSETTA. [*Smiling.*] Couldn't you? How nice.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. You have been crying. What made you?

ROSETTA. [*Sadly.*] My Heart. It isn't right. It doesn't make me feel.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. You mustn't cry any more, Rosetta. That is the reason I came back—to tell you it doesn't matter your not having one.

ROSETTA. But it matters to me.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Taking her in his arms.*] Never mind, my darling, you shall have mine instead.

ROSETTA. [*Anxiously.*] And what will *you* do then?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Still holding her close.*] Oh, I shall manage. I shall not miss it so much if I have you.

ROSETTA. But what will become of Adam?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Adam will have his sad songs. What more does he need? [*He takes* ROSETTA'S *face in both his hands, kissing her first on the cheeks and then on the lips.*] I can't go back to the World without you, Rosetta, you dear, prim, precise Darling with your queer little Cross-Stitch Heart.

ROSETTA. [*Responding to his words and kisses as one in a daze.*] Oh, Man-of-the-World, hold me closer, for something very strange is happening to me!

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Drawing her closer.*] Nothing can happen while my arms are round you.

ROSETTA. [*In a far-away voice.*] But it can—it did. Just now when you kissed me, I was suddenly very hot and then I was cold, and I wanted to laugh and yet there were tears in my eyes, and something very strange—here—[*She touches her left side, keeping her hands there throughout the next few speeches.*] It felt very sweet, but sharp too. [*She breaks off wonderingly.*]

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Eagerly.*] Rosetta! [*He stares down at her hand over the Heart.*] You felt it there? When I kissed you and held you close, you are quite sure it was there, on your left side?

ROSETTA. Yes, just there where you put my Heart. [*Suddenly starting.*] Oh, it couldn't be——

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Who knows? Very strange things can happen sometimes. In the World, we call them Miracles.

ROSETTA. [*Still wondering.*] It doesn't stop. [*Looking all about her in amazement.*] And nothing is the way

it was before—the roses smell so much sweeter and the birds are all singing and your eyes have new little lights in them.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. And you are changed too, Rosetta. You are no longer part of the pattern of this place. Your little Cross-Stitch Heart has begun to beat.

ROSETTA. [*Incredulously joyful.*] It is true. At last, at last I can feel! Oh, Man-of-the-World, how good it is to feel!

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. There will be times when it may not seem so to you, but we will not speak of them now.

ROSETTA. [*More to herself.*] I thought my Heart was not like the others. I was going to hide it away and never put it on again because it could not make me love Adam. [*A little frightened.*] Oh, suppose I had?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Thoughtfully.*] Terrible things happen in the World, Rosetta, when people don't trust their Hearts; when they try to tell them whom to love.

ROSETTA. [*Earnestly.*] I shall always trust mine now. [*She takes her hand away from her side to peer down at it. The Cross-Stitch Heart no longer shows.*] Why, where has my Heart gone to, Man-of-the-World?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. It is in a safer place than your little work-bag, my dear. Can't you feel it deep inside yourself?

ROSETTA. [*Nodding.*] Yes, only I should like it to be where I can see it too.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. It wouldn't do in the World, Rosetta. There are thieves out there and it's much too precious a Heart to be stolen.

ROSETTA. Is it?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Yes, I shall see to that.

ROSETTA. Always?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Kissing her again.*] As long as I live.

ROSETTA. [*Shivering a little.*] Oh, it frightens me when you say that. [*Looking toward the tomb.*] And I do not like to look at the willow and the urn any more. I know now why Adam's songs have to be sad, only I never wanted to cry till I had my Heart and felt Love and knew that you and I— [*She breaks off with a little catch in her voice.*]

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Comforting her.*] I know, but you must not think of it. [*He rises and leads her away from the bench.*] Come now—it is time for us to go.

ROSETTA. Into the World?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Yes, this way. [*He leads her down stage till they are directly at the edge of the footlights. He steps over the garden hedge and helps her to follow him.*] Remember, nothing will be the same to you again. You can never return to this place once you have stepped out of the pattern.

ROSETTA. [*Confidently.*] I am coming, Man-of-the-World. [*After she has taken the fatal step, she looks back, rubbing her eyes a little confusedly.*] But how different it looks from this side! It never seemed strange to me before.

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. Because you were part of the pattern then.

ROSETTA. [*Softly.*] And was I like that, too—as stiff and strange?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Kissing her.*] My dear!

[*At this moment* ADAM *and the* SAMPLER MOTHER *appear in the doorway, scanning the garden for a sight of her. It is plain that while the lovers can see those in the garden those within the hedge cannot see beyond it.*

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Calling.*] Rosetta! Rosetta! Where have you gone?

ROSETTA. [*Starting guiltily.*] Into the World, if you please, Mamma. [*Frightened as she clings to the* MAN-OF-THE-WORLD.] Oh, dear, whatever will she say to me?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*Consolingly.*] Do not tremble so. She and Adam cannot even see you.

ROSETTA. [*Still fearful.*] Are you quite sure?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. If you do not believe me—see——

[*He draws her close to him directly in front of the* SAMPLER MOTHER, *who continues to look about the garden oblivious to this sight.*

ADAM. [*Drawing nearer to the* SAMPLER MOTHER.] Madam, you called me?

SAMPLER MOTHER. Adam, Rosetta is gone.

ADAM. [*Looking down stupidly at the book he still carries.*] She sent me to fetch the "Manual of Manners and Morals." [*He holds it out dumbly.*] She cannot have gone far.

SAMPLER MOTHER. Something tells me she has gone *very* far, Adam, and *not alone.* [*She rolls her eye at him significantly and collapses on the bench.*]

ADAM. [*Looking all about him blankly.*] Gone, just as she and I were going to be married! [*Reluctantly.*] Now I suppose I must pursue them.

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Clutching him.*] No, Adam, no. [*Closing her eyes, but still retaining her hold on him.*] I feel I am about to swoon.

ADAM. [*Hesitating.*] But, Madam, is it not my duty to save her?

SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Still firm.*] I cannot lose you, too, Adam, and remember—the pitfalls and the snares. [*He subsides and fans her dutifully.*]

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. [*To* ROSETTA.] You would not go back to them now?

ROSETTA. [*Settling herself closer in his arms.*] No, no. Oh, dear, now he is going to sing!

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. You need not listen to him any more.

ROSETTA. And they will not know if we kiss again?

MAN-OF-THE-WORLD. We may kiss as much as we please now, Rosetta.

[*As they do so,* ADAM *begins to sing his song, with the* SAMPLER MOTHER *joining in mournfully. The lovers also begin to sing Rosetta's "Rose Song" against this,*

ADAM and SAMPLER MOTHER. [*Singing.*]

The fairest flowers must decay.
Seek and find them while ye may.

ROSETTA AND MAN-OF-THE-WORLD.

White Rose, Red Rose,
Nodding overhead Rose,
Sweet, Sweet, Sweet.

[*After the lovers begin* ROSETTA'S *song* ADAM *and the* SAMPLER MOTHER *continue to go through the motions of singing* ADAM'S *song. Their lips move conscientiously but no sound comes from them.* ROSETTA *and the* MAN-OF-THE-WORLD *are still singing as the curtain falls.*

CURTAIN

"GREASY LUCK"

A FRAGMENT OUT OF THE NEW ENGLAND WHALING DAYS

CHARACTERS

EUNICE STARBUCK
ABBIE GARDNER
DAVID FOLGER
COUSIN CHASE

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"GREASY LUCK" *

SCENE: *The parlor of a Nantucket house in the heyday of the whaling period, about* 1840. *It is furnished plainly but with great dignity, old-fashioned mahogany chairs and tables, family portraits and prints of ships and whaling about. Door right leads into hall. At rise of curtain* EUNICE STARBUCK *is seated on an old sofa well down stage, sewing some squares of patchwork together. She is pretty and appealing, about twenty-seven, with a rather serious, sensitive face. Her hair is parted smoothly in a quaint fashion and her flowered muslin dress is voluminous and billowing.*

ABBIE. [*Calling from street outside the window, back centre.*] Eunice, can I come in? Are you all alone?

EUNICE. [*Going to window and leaning out.*] Why, Abbie, come right in. I looked for you to be at the shearin' too. [*She goes to the door and opens it to admit another girl about her own age, but gayer and more lively of manner. This is* ABBIE GARDNER, *who wears a bonnet and shawl.* EUNICE *and she kiss one another affectionately.*] I had a little slatch in my work and come in here to cool off from the kitchen-fire.

ABBIE. [*Seating herself and taking off shawl.*] There, I knew they'd go off an' leave you with the preservin' on your hands! It wouldn't of hurt your Cousin Anna or

*A native American phrase, coined in Nantucket, New Bedford and New England coast towns, which meant: "A good voyage to you and come back with plenty of whale-oil aboard." To wish a whaleman "Greasy Luck" was the equivalent of our "Bon Voyage."

Molly or Sophie to stay behind for once an' let you an' David enjoy yourself at the shearin' same's everybody else.

EUNICE. [*Smiling.*] What about you an' John bein' there, Abbie?

ABBIE. Oh, it ain't the same thing for John'n me. We're gettin' to be old married folks now. Don't need to go off cruisin' to sociables an' shearin's. Anyhow I couldn't leave the baby all day. She's commencin' to cut her teeth. [*Leaning toward the other girl and speaking more seriously.*] It's you I'm thinkin' of Eunice Starbuck; it's a shame the way you let 'em all put things on you.

EUNICE. [*Loyally.*] The raspberries would of spoiled if we'd kept 'em over till to-morrow an' I always was a better hand at preservin' than Cousin Anna or the girls. [*With pride.*] Just did up twenty-seven jars o' jam an' the raspberry shrub's strainin' in the pantry now.

ABBIE. [*Admiringly.*] An' there you sit lookin' as if you'd never been near a stove all day! I declare I hope David's sensible to the kind of wife you're goin' to make him.

EUNICE. [*Laughing.*] Well, David does like my raspberry jam. [*Changing subject politely to her guest.*] John'll be leavin' soon, I hear. They say the "Hesper's" most fitted out.

ABBIE. John thinks she'll be shipshape by the end o' next week.

EUNICE. How long they signin' for?

ABBIE. [*With the cheerful acceptance of a whaler's wife.*] Only a year this time an' of course if they strike greasy luck might not be more'n nine or ten months.

EUNICE. [*Holding out her patchwork.*] What do you think o' this for the centre o' my quilt? I got it out to show David. He'll be stoppin' by most any time now. [*She points out the fine bits of her work while* ABBIE *bends*

nearer to admire.] It's my own designin'. I mean to call it "The Blowin' Whale" pattern. I cut it after that pictur [*pointing to one on the wall*] from an old gray flannel shirt o' Cousin Enoch's.

ABBIE. [*Admiring it.*] It's just as natural as life, Eunice; I don't see how you ever did it.

EUNICE. [*Modestly.*] I guess David won't think so much of the whale's looks. The tail's kind of queer, but then I couldn't be expected to know whales same's he does.

ABBIE. [*With a significant sniff.*] It's a lovely pattern and David's got no call to pass remarks on it. He ain't struck so many whales himself he can afford to.

EUNICE. [*Hurt, and instantly on the defensive.*] That's not David's fault, Abbie, an' you know it, no matter what anybody says. He's been first in the long boats time an' time again.

ABBIE. [*Not disagreeably, merely matter of fact.*] I never said he wasn't, Eunice. But how many whales has he got to his credit?

EUNICE. [*Fencing.*] Folks can't always *get* the whales they sight. David says if he had a dollar for every one he's give chase to the last seven years we'd have enough to get married an' set up housekeepin' to-morrow.

ABBIE. [*With feeling.*] Well, I wish he had then! I want to see you two married and settled. I declare I felt like cryin' myself when I heard the "Huntress" was back with salt water in her casks for ballust stead o' good sperm-oil. David didn't make a cent over'n above his costs, I 'spose?

EUNICE. [*Low, with an effort.*] No, not much of a lay* this time. [*With a little sigh.*] Does seem's if there was a spell set against him every trip.

*A share or percentage. All whaling voyages were conducted on the profit-sharing basis. Each man received his proportionate part of the proceeds of the voyage.

ABBIE. [*Sympathetically.*] I know. Honest, Eunice, I'd rather John's ship had come back without a barrel of oil this trip an' David had had his turn of luck.

EUNICE. Wishin's no use, Abbie, but I'd be real ungrateful not to thank you just the same.

ABBIE. [*Speaking hesitantly, with an effort.*] I had to come over to-day; there's something I thought you'd ought to know. I'd want you to do the same by me if 'twas John stead o' David. You'n I've always been closer'n most an'——

EUNICE. [*Breaking in.*] If it's somethin' 'bout David——

ABBIE. [*Quickly.*] 'Tis, but it's not his fault. There's been lots o' talk—oh, nothin' you'd be likely to hear, down to the wharves mostly. No one blames him for it, only it's natural they don't want to take chances.

EUNICE. [*Tensely.*] I can't get the drift o' this, Abbie, you've got to tell me out plain.

ABBIE. [*Blurting out the truth.*] John says David's tried to get a berth on every ship that's in, but no one's willin' to sign him up for another trip 'count o' his bein' such a Jonah.

EUNICE. [*With sudden bitterness.*] Oh, they—they call him that, do they?

ABBIE. [*Quickly.*] 'Tisn't because they don't like David, it's just his luck. They daren't risk havin' him aboard.

EUNICE. [*Hotly.*] There's not another man from Nantucket better at harpoonin'.

ABBIE. But the rest o' the crew's likely to grumble. You know the notions they get on a long trip, an' no one wants trouble among the men.

EUNICE. [*Low, to herself.*] I thought he acted kind of down lately.

ABBIE. [*Earnestly.*] Eunice, you'd better watch out or he'll go an' sign articles on the "Maypole." You heard 'em callin' for men for her just now an' John says they're so hard put to get a crew they'll take any one with a pair o' hands and feet.

EUNICE. [*Startled.*] The "Maypole!" Not that leaky old tub! Why she wasn't even built for whalin'! I've heard say she's hardly seaworthy an' they aim to make a three-year voyage. [*She breaks off aghast.*]

ABBIE. John's tried to reason him out of it, but he says David's terrible set. His pride's hurt an' he won't listen. I guess he will if you talk to him; he's bound to. It's same's in quiltin'—if you want things to hold, you've got to hook 'em real firm.

EUNICE. [*In a sudden burst of pent-up desperation.*] Don't seem's if I could put through another spell o' the waitin', Abbie. Maybe if I was married same's you, with children an' a house o' my own 'twouldn't be so hard, but the way things are now an' the way they've been the last six years,— [*She makes a little discouraged gesture.*]

ABBIE. [*Sympathetically.*] I know, you've had it harder'n most livin' here on your cousins. David shouldn't expect you to go on forever like this. That's why I come around now without waitin' a minute. I had to tell you how 'twas, an' about Cousin Chase——

EUNICE. About Cousin Chase?

ABBIE. [*Hurrying on.*] Yes, he's comin' round here later to see you'n David. It's 'bout David's goin' in to the store with him. He's been pesterin' John for months back an' it sort o' come to me this afternoon 'twould be the very thing for David. Good pay an' a steady job an' likely as not a share in the business after a year or two.

EUNICE. [*Catching at the idea eagerly.*] An' those rooms over the store that no one uses now. They'd be

real good to set up housekeepin' in. They've got a nice view of the harbor an' we could have 'em all to ourselves—[*She breaks off and goes on doubtfully.*] But David doesn't have any opinion o' landlubbers an' he may not—want——

ABBIE. You've got to *make* him want to, Eunice. Dear knows I'd be the last one to keep a man from followin' the sea, but 'tisn't as if he hadn't for seven years now. It's time he thought o' your part an' how you'll be throwin' away the best years of your lives this way.

EUNICE. Oh, I know—I know.

ABBIE. I got scared hearin' the talk 'bout the "Maypole" sailin' with the tide to-morrow mornin' if they could get enough men. That's why I come right along ahead o' Cousin Chase. He said he'd stop by in half or three-quarters of an hour. I thought there'd be time for you to sound David first.

EUNICE. [*Gratefully.*] It was good of you, Abbie, real good. You've always stood by me an' I don't know what I'd of done without you. [*She starts at sound outside.*] There's David now. I can tell his step.

ABBIE. [*Preparing to go.*] I'll be goin' then; don't let on I said anything to you, Eunice, but I thought you'd ought to know.

EUNICE. [*Moving toward door with her.*] I expect David couldn't bring himself to tell me before. He hates to let on when things touch him real hard. [*In her old manner.*] Drop in again when you can an' I hope the baby's teeth'll stop botherin' soon.

[*As they open the door* DAVID FOLGER *appears on the threshold, a pleasant-faced, powerfully built six-footer of twenty-eight or nine, dressed in the heavy, seafaring clothes of the time, rather long, full trousers, clumsy boots, home-made*

shirt and short jacket. He is naturally kindly and cheerful, though as the scene continues he shows that he can be proud and stubborn as well. Although it is evident that he is in love with EUNICE, *he is first and foremost a whaleman, bred to the sea.*

ABBIE. Afternoon, David.

DAVID. Afternoon, Abbie. Why ain't you over to the shearin'?

ABBIE. I got plenty to keep me busy right here. Just ran in to see Eunice's new quilt pattern. [*Half out of the door she turns and speaks significantly to* EUNICE.] You remember what I told you, Eunice, 'bout that hookin' part. Looks to me as if you'd better get started soon. [*Exit* ABBIE.]

DAVID. [*Looking after her.*] What she mean by that?

EUNICE. [*Hastily.*] Oh, she was just givin' me some advice. That's quiltin' talk. [*She runs over to him and catches eagerly at his coat sleeve.*] What kept you so long down to the wharves, David? I thought you'd never come. [*He bends down to kiss her, then straightens up and looks a little guiltily toward door.*] It's all right. The folks are all off to the shearin'.

DAVID. [*Kissing her with hearty and rather awkward affection.*] Well, that's a comfort. Don't know what 'tis 'bout your Cousin Anna, but I'd rather face a fightin' whale or an ugly crew'n take one o' those sideways looks of her's. I can't ever do or say a thing right when she's by.

EUNICE. [*With a little sigh.*] I know. S'posin' you'd had her over you for fifteen years same's I have?

DAVID. [*Dropping down on the sofa and drawing her beside him.*] I'd of taken to sea earlier'n I did, that's all!

[*He pulls out his pipe, then hesitates.*] She'd know if I was to smoke my pipe in here, I expect?

EUNICE. [*Taking up her sewing.*] You know how she feels 'bout tobacco smoke, 'specially in here with the new curtains.

DAVID. [*Putting pipe away reluctantly.*] Well, I wouldn't want to do nothin' to make trouble for you.

EUNICE. [*Slipping her hand in his.*] You can smoke anywhere you've a mind to when we have a house of our own. I'll be so glad to have the curtains smell of tobacco, for that'll mean you're home, not off whalin'. [*There is a second's pause. It is plain to the audience that she is trying to begin all the things that are uppermost in her mind to say to him.*] David, I—I haven't said anythin' 'bout it till now. You an' I haven't had a proper chance alone together before. I knew you were worryin' an' things hadn't gone so's you could put by a cent an' I didn't want to bother you, only I've got to ask you now. It means everythin' to me an'——

DAVID. [*Stooping to pick up the work which has slipped from her lap to the floor, he fingers it curiously, only half listening to her words.*] What's this? Somethin' fancy you're up to? [*He twists and turns the square in his hands.*] Well, if it ain't a whale as true's I live! A blowin' whale.

EUNICE. [*Pleased in spite of the interruption.*] I'm glad you like it. Nothin' left to do now but sew it on to the middle square o' the quilt. There's not another such pattern anywhere on the Island. I commenced it the day you left on the last voyage. This white's from my old poplin, remember?

DAVID. I wouldn't be likely to forget. You wore it to meetin' time we were first cried.

EUNICE. [*Leaning closer to him.*] There's bits of

most all my dresses sewed into it. [*She rubs her cheek softly against his sleeve.*] I was so lonesome for you all the time I was makin' it, seems as if that's all in it, too, even if it don't show.

DAVID. [*Stroking her hair.*] Missed me like that, did you? Honest?

EUNICE. Oh, David, do you have to ask? [*Clinging closer to him and speaking with soft earnestness.*] It's goin' to be our marriageable quilt.

DAVID. [*Repeating her words slowly.*] Our marriageable quilt— [*He breaks off and goes on in sudden bitterness.*] It's goin' on seven years since we first commenced to talk o' that.

EUNICE. Seems as if I couldn't put through another spell o' the waitin', David. Seven years is long for anybody, but it's longest for a girl like me, livin' on other folks' charity an' not gettin' younger or prettier or——

DAVID. [*Breaking in.*] Don't you talk like that. You know I've never had eyes for no other woman. I never see any sort of a she-rig could stand alongside you!

EUNICE. My, but it's good to hear you say that, [*with a sudden burst of honesty*] even if I know my color ain't what 'twas when you first asked me. My cheeks were pink all the time then, not just when I've been over the fire or walkin' in the wind. An' that line didn't use to be there —see? [*She touches her forehead lightly and breaks off.*] A girl can't help gettin' fearful sometimes.

DAVID. [*Smiling.*] Thought I might fetch back a Chinese lady or one of those black ones with a ring in her nose, did you? [*He draws her closer to him.*] Why, there ain't any sort o' foreign jadehopper I'd look at twice.

EUNICE. [*Slowly, her face upturned to his.*] 'Tisn't only that, dear, sometimes it's folks themselves changing, —in their feelin's, I mean, an'—an' gettin' used to doin'

without each other. [*She turns to him in a sort of pent-up desperation.*] Oh, David, if I ever thought you——

DAVID. [*Soothingly.*] Now there's no call for you to go an' get yourself all wadgetty. You'd ought to know me well enough after all these years.

EUNICE. [*With a touch of bitterness.*] How much have I seen of you in the last seven?

DAVID. [*A little taken aback.*] Why as much as most folks in these parts, I guess. I don't know exactly.

EUNICE. Well, I know. I've figured it all out on paper an' in my head. It comes to three month an' nineteen days all told.

DAVID. [*Apologetically.*] 'Twould of been longer if I'd had greasy luck an' could of stopped ashore between whiles, but you know how it's been?

EUNICE. [*With a little sigh.*] Oh, I know. [*Very tensely.*] David, you do want to get married? You'd do anything so's we could, wouldn't you?

DAVID. Why, yes, that is, anythin' in reason.

EUNICE. [*Relieved.*] Then you'll listen to Cousin Chase when he comes?

DAVID. Cousin Chase?

EUNICE. [*Hurrying on.*] Yes, he's comin' here. He wants to talk to you 'bout a proposition an'——

DAVID. [*Interrupting her.*] If it's got anythin' to do with that store o' his——

EUNICE. [*Breaking in.*] Oh, David, if he gives you a chance, don't throw it away.

DAVID. [*Evasively.*] I got plans of my own.

EUNICE. [*Instantly on the alert.*] You wouldn't go an' sign articles for any voyage without you told me first?

DAVID. [*Shifting a little uneasily.*] Why what would you know 'bout a vessel or ship's articles, Eunice?

EUNICE. [*With spirit.*] I know a vessel's not much

good when they have to cry her up an' down streets for weeks 'fore they can sign up a crew, [*significantly*] same's they're doin' with the "Maypole."

DAVID. [*Quickly.*] Don't you go believin' all the things you hear.

EUNICE. [*Unable to keep back her anxiety any longer.*] David, you haven't signed articles to ship on her next trip, have you?

DAVID. No, not yet, I haven't.

EUNICE. You—you're sure you're tellin' me the truth, dear?

DAVID. [*Hurt.*] You never doubted my word before.

EUNICE. [*Flinging her arms about him.*] An' I'm not doubtin' you now; I'm not really. It's only I'm all put about in my mind so's I don't hardly know what I'm sayin'. [*There is a sound of a door-knocker outside. They spring apart and* EUNICE *hurries out to open the front door, speaking as she goes.*] That'll be Cousin Chase at the door now. You'll listen to him for both our sakes? [*She runs back to* DAVID *once more and they kiss.* DAVID'S *eyes follow her and he shifts a little uneasily on his feet. It should be evident to the audience that he is moved more by her personality than by her arguments.*]

[*Presently* EUNICE *reappears at the door, followed by a small elderly man. He wears a home-made quaintly cut suit, and walks as if he were a little rheumatic.*]

EUNICE. [*At door.*] David, here's Cousin Chase to see you. [*She pulls forward a chair and takes his hat.*]

COUSIN CHASE. [*Good-naturedly.*] Long's they said you weren't down to the wharves I presumed likely I could find you up here with Eunice.

DAVID. [*Smiling at* EUNICE.] Well, it's a pretty good place to be. I don't mind who hears me say so.

COUSIN CHASE. [*Seating himself and mopping his face.*] That's right. That's the way I like to hear young folks talk.

EUNICE. [*With a little deprecating laugh.*] We're not such dreadful young folks any more, David'n me.

COUSIN CHASE. [*Patting her hand affectionately.*] You'll always seem so to me even if 'tis—let's see, how many years now since you an' David commenced keepin' company?

EUNICE. Goin' on seven. David's been twice round the Horn in 'em an' dear knows where else besides.

COUSIN CHASE. [*Wagging his head.*] Time he stayed put a spell. This roamin' the globe for whale-blubber's all right for awhile, but where's it all come to in the long run?

DAVID. [*Quickly.*] It comes to a pile o' money if you strike it greasy like the "Isabella" did last voyage. [*Enviously.*] Eight hundred and thirty barrel o' sperm. I guess Ira Swain and Will Coffin can have 'bout anything they fancy from now on.

COUSIN CHASE. There's other ways of makin' a pile besides goin' to sea for it. It's that I come round to talk over with you.

EUNICE. [*Moving toward door tactfully.*] Well, I guess you don't need me round. I'll go see to those raspberries. [*From the doorway.*] Maybe you'd try a glass of my shrub if I was to bring it to you, Cousin Chase?

COUSIN CHASE. Don't you trouble yourself, Eunice. What I got to say to David won't take me long. [*She goes and there is a pause as the two men settle back into their places again.*] No, won't take me long to say or you to hear me out—an' I want you should understand me right from the start. I'm not aimin' to turn you from the sea.

I've lived too long round these parts to try that. But I come here to make you a proposition, fair an' square, an' you can take it or not as you've a mind to. [*He sits back studying the other.*] How old have you got to be, David?

DAVID. Twenty-eight last January.

COUSIN CHASE. I see. Things don't appear to be so good's they might be with you?

DAVID. [*Reluctantly.*] Well, can't say's they are right now. I've been runnin' pretty close to the wind lately.

COUSIN CHASE. 'Twas the same last voyage, an' the one 'fore that. Can't see's you've made much headway.

DAVID. [*On the defensive.*] Most every one gets caught in the doldrums one time or another. There's bound to be better weather ahead if you can just keep holdin' on. I'm willin' to take my chances along with the rest.

COUSIN CHASE. You've got Eunice to think of too, remember. But I didn't come here to talk o' that. From all I hear it looks as if they ain't exactly pesterin' you to ship with 'em this trip, so I thought a good steady job ashore might not seem so bad to you for a change.

DAVID. [*Slowly.*] You mean you're offerin' me a berth in the store with you?

COUSIN CHASE. Yes, it's been gettin' too much for me to carry alone lately. Oh, I've had one an' another take a hand busy spells, but you know well's I do it's easier growin' peas at sea than 'tis to get a smart man to help you out on land. Course, I *could* send to Boston, but I don't hanker to take an Off-Islander in with me, for I mean it should be a share in the business after a six months' trial.

DAVID. [*Non-committally.*] That's a generous proposition.

COUSIN CHASE. I've got no family of my own an' I want to feel easy in my mind 'bout the business bein' in good

hands after I'm gone. Eunice is my Cousin Ruth's girl an' that's another reason. I'm fond o' Eunice—like to see her married an' raisin' a family, 'stead of goin' on here where she's at every one's beck an' call.

DAVID. [*With spirit.*] She ain't always goin' to be.

COUSIN CHASE. Those rooms over the store have been empty ever since Sister Mary died an' I went to live up street. You an' Eunice could have 'em an' welcome. Move your things right in next week if you want to.

DAVID. [*Slowly.*] Eunice would like that, but I'm fearful I wouldn't. I——

COUSIN CHASE. [*Cutting him short.*] Give yourself plenty of time. Talk it over together. Whalin's no kind of a life after a man's thirty, unless he's master or mate with a share in the vessel.

DAVID. I'm a long ways from that yet. Still, I can't see myself anchored to a counter the rest of my days; not anyways till I've showed 'em I can have greasy luck same's the rest.

COUSIN CHASE. [*Rising.*] That's it—that's the trouble with whalin'. It's hard work an' dirty work, but just because there's always that chance o' luck——

DAVID. [*Breaking in eagerly.*] That's how 'tis!

COUSIN CHASE. [*Speaking seriously.*] Don't be too hasty decidin' this, an' remember, David, I've come to you in good faith. I didn't like that talk I've been hearin' 'bout you shippin' on the "Maypole."

DAVID. [*Again on the defensive.*] I thought somebody must of put you up to comin' here to-day.

COUSIN CHASE. I'd made up my mind to offer it to you anyways, but I wanted to be sure you knew, 'fore you had a chance to do somethin' you might be sorry for later on. I'd certainly hate to see any man throwin' himself away on that leaky old blubber-hunter.

DAVID. [*Bitterly.*] 'Sposin' a man can't get a berth on any better vessel?

COUSIN CHASE. [*At door.*] Then I'd say better try his hand at some different line. [*Opening door.*] Stop in the store to-morrow if you're down that way. I can show you the books an' if it's "yes" we can put things down in black an' white. I'm prepared to pay you good wages.

DAVID. [*Hesitating.*] Thank you for askin' me. I'll stop in—if I'm anyway's round to-morrow.

[COUSIN CHASE *does not pay attention to these last words for he has spied* EUNICE *in the hall outside and beckons her in.*]

COUSIN CHASE. Well, Eunice, we've had our little talk an' now I'm goin' down to the back garden to take a look at your Uncle Enoch's early cucumbers. He maintains his are three inches ahead o' mine, so I told him I meant to measure 'em myself first chance I got. [*He takes out a piece of string from his pocket, smiling over it.*]

EUNICE. [*Rejoining him at the door.*] Now's a good time to do it. Uncle Enoch won't be back till late from the Shearin'. Want I should show you where they are?

COUSIN CHASE. [*Moving off.*] Oh, I can find 'em. Don't you trouble.

EUNICE. [*After him.*] Better come back this way; that paint's not dry on the back gate yet. [*Instantly she turns to* DAVID, *all eager hopefulness. She goes over to him quickly, catching at his arm.*] David, tell me—quick!

DAVID. [*Patting her shoulder, absently.*] Well, what you want me to tell you, dear?

EUNICE. [*Full of suspense.*] Why if he made you the offer—'bout goin' in the store with him, an' if you said you would?

DAVID. [*Hedging.*] Oh, he made me the offer right enough.

EUNICE. [*Relieved but still apprehensive.*] An' you took it? David, you told him you would?

DAVID. He said I was to think it over, but I guess I know my answer without much thinkin'.

EUNICE. Oh, David, you will take it, won't you? It's a chance in a hundred.

DAVID. For those that want it, maybe, not for me.

EUNICE. [*Beginning to plead desperately.*] You said you'd do anythin' so's we could get married.

DAVID. I said I'd do anythin' in reason, but when it comes to workin' behind a counter, helpin' to fit out ships an' crews, can't you see I couldn't do it, dear?

EUNICE. You'd get used to it.

DAVID. Think o' what they'd be sayin' 'bout me an' the laughs they'd be havin' over me behind my back. "There's David Folger," they'd say, "quit whalin' 'fore he'd even got to be third mate. He's a credit to Nantucket, ladlin' out soft soap from a bucket 'stead of oil from the try-pots an' measurin' off calico when he used to be first in the long boats!"

EUNICE. 'Sposin' they do talk an' laugh now'n then. What's that to you an' me? There wouldn't be one of 'em that wouldn't envy you comin' home from work every night o' the year 'stead of a week here an' a month there in two, maybe three years. [*Clinging to him closer.*] David, if you really loved me, same's you used to, you wouldn't——

DAVID. [*Drawing her to him almost fiercely.*] Don't you talk foolishness like that when you know there's no one else but you means anythin' to me. Why sometimes if I let myself get thinkin' how much I want you—all to myself—[*He breaks off.*]

EUNICE. An' all you've got to do is say "yes" to Cousin

Chase an' we'd be comfortable an' settled the rest of our lives. That's all you've got to do, but you won't.

DAVID. [*Smoothing her hair as he tries to make himself clear.*] You don't rightly understand. Maybe it's somethin' no woman can, but it's like this: I've got to show 'em I can do as well's anybody. Just because they're callin' me a Jonah and not wantin' to take me's the very reason I've got to go.

EUNICE. Let 'em say what they want to, long's we know it's not true.

DAVID. [*Going on with his argument unheeding.*] If I turn landlubber now it certainly would look as if I thought they were right; as if I allowed I was beaten—an' I ain't beaten. I'll show 'em I can have greasy luck, too, even if I do have to ship on the "Maypole."

EUNICE. [*With a little frightened cry at the name.*] Oh, David, not that! You said you wouldn't!

DAVID. [*Firmly.*] I said I *hadn't*. Oh, I know she's not much of a vessel, but she's the only one that'll take me an' after all she's got as good a chance to get whales as the best of 'em.

EUNICE. [*Pleading more earnestly.*] David, you can't go on her. You can't. It was bad enough before when you shipped on the "Huntress" an' the "Tropic Bird" an' the rest. They were all fitted proper an' built for whalin' an' 'twas never for more'n two years. Now you're askin' me to go through three years of it. Think what that means for us both!

DAVID. [*With a low groan.*] Do you 'spose I've been thinkin' of anythin' else the last week? I tried every other way I could think of, but it's no use. Get a name for anythin' an' it'll follow you round the globe.

EUNICE. Folks forget, though, dear. They forget dreadful easy.

DAVID. Not always, an' anyways I wouldn't. I'd know I'd given up too soon. I wouldn't have no respect for myself the rest o' my days.

EUNICE. But three years, David. That would mean ten years waitin' all told an' maybe even then—[*She breaks off, trying to force back the tears that are beginning to come.*] In three years I'll be past thirty. [*Holding more tightly to him as if he were already leaving her.*] Oh, if you want me you'd ought to take me now 'fore the best o' me's gone waitin' and workin' for other folks.

DAVID. [*Moved by her words and tears.*] Eunice, I'd give my right hand to be able to.

EUNICE. I could have had Ira Swain in the old days. He pestered me to marry him hard enough, but I put him off to wait for you. [*In a last desperate effort.*] Not that I'm holdin' it up against you, dear. I'd do the same all over again, only we've each of us got just one life apiece an' folks get old so soon, an'—an' such a lot can happen.

DAVID. [*Soothingly.*] There now, you mustn't get thinkin' such thoughts.

EUNICE. How can I help it when I see life goin' on all round me? Other folks lovin' an' weddin' and raisin' children same's you'n I planned to do.

DAVID. [*Reassuringly.*] An' we will yet.

EUNICE. [*More wildly.*] 'Sposin' you never come back! 'Sposin' the "Maypole" goes to the bottom.

DAVID. [*Trying to calm her.*] Hush, dear, don't say such things.

EUNICE. You know the danger as well as I do. You know Martin Macy an' Hiram Mitchell went down an' lots beside. [*Her tears gathering headway.*] An' 'sposin' I was to take sick an' die. Why, I could be under a tombstone months an' years 'fore you'd even know——

DAVID. [*Alarmed at her emotion.*] Eunice, you mustn't carry on so. It chills me all up to hear you.

EUNICE. David, if you love me same's you say, you won't do it. You won't ship on the "Maypole." I've never asked anythin' of you before an' I won't ever again.

DAVID. [*Disturbed and hesitant.*] Eunice, I—I didn't know 'twas like this with you.

EUNICE. You know now, an' 'tisn't too late to stay on with Cousin Chase.

DAVID. [*Torn between her appeals and his own convictions.*] I'm all at sea—don't know what I'd ought to do.

EUNICE. [*More tense.*] Anythin' could happen in three years, David. I might get like Hester Swain. You know how 'twas with her after Jim was drowned. She got seein' an' hearin' things—things that weren't real at all. She wasn't always queer like that, not till after she'd had more'n she could stand.

DAVID. [*Frightened and holding her closer.*] But you're not like her—you— [*He breaks off and it is plain a struggle is going on in him.*] Eunice, if I thought I'd driven you to anythin' like that I'd——

EUNICE. [*Seeing her chance and breaking in.*] Oh, David dear, you're not goin' to put your pride before our love.

DAVID. [*Weakening under her appeal.*] Maybe I could hold out against you if I—if I didn't love you an' want you so!

[*He holds her closer in another kiss. As they stand so there comes distantly from the street the sound of a bell and a voice raised in a sort of monotonous chant. It is the Town Crier coming steadily nearer so that little by little his words grow in distinctness as he cries the same news over and over.*]

EUNICE. [*Softly.*] Thank God you're goin' to stay, David, I can see it in your eyes.

DAVID. I expect maybe it is my turn to give in—turn about's fair play.

[*Crier's voice and bell outside, very distinct now.*] Oh, yez—oh, yez—oh, yez—wanted—able-bodied young men to sign articles for three-year whalin' voyage—ship "Maypole," Nantucket built, Andrew Coffin, Master; Ethan Gardner, mate. Sails with the tide to-morrow mornin'—all clothin' an' necessities furnished on credit of the voyage, Oh, yez—oh, yez—oh, yez.

[DAVID *and* EUNICE *stand perfectly still, listening in spite of themselves. As he listens* DAVID *stiffens visibly. He becomes the whaleman again rather than the lover.* EUNICE *feels him slipping from her hold and tries to distract him.*

EUNICE. [*Hurrying to break in.*] There's that furniture o' mothers stored in the barn. You could get John to help you fetch it down to the store to-morrow— [*He does not answer. His head is lifted as he listens to the Crier, repeating the cry, but growing more distant now.*] You hear me, dear?

DAVID. [*Rousing himself suddenly.*] I didn't hear nothin' but that. An' I won't hear nothin' else all the rest o' my days unless I go. I'll hate myself an' you an' our love an' everythin'. I was a fool to think I could stay behind.

EUNICE. But, David, you'd forget.

DAVID. Forget! Hearin' that every day! Why every time one sailed I'd be cursin' myself to think I wasn't aboard her an' 'twould be worse when one came in loaded to the decks.

EUNICE. I want my chance at happiness, too.

DAVID. 'Twouldn't bring you no happiness bein' an-

chored to a man that knew himself for a coward an' a fool, an' I'd know I was one. [*With conviction.*] Eunice, you've got to let me go.

EUNICE. Oh, David, it's a terrible thing you're askin' of me. I can't do it—I can't.

DAVID. [*Holding her close, but looking on beyond her.*] I'll make it up to you yet. We're goin' to strike it greasy this trip. I can feel it in my bones. [*A curious note of elation comes into his voice.*] When I take my turn at the watch I'm goin' to see farther'n any one yet. *"There she blows!"* I'll cry, fit to burst my lungs! [*Unconsciously his voice rises. He is all animation and excitement as he has not been before.* EUNICE *stares at him in fascinated helplessness.*] It's got to be, I tell you.

EUNICE. [*Feeling him slipping from her and knowing she is going to yield eventually.*] Oh, David, there must be some other way. There's upward o' three thousand Nantucket men off whalin' now. Have you got to go too?

DAVID. [*Simply, but with absolute sureness.*] That's it—I've got to go too. [*Pleading with her.*] You see how 'tis, dear, you do see?

EUNICE. [*A little wearily.*] Yes, I see—everythin's dreadful plain to me.

DAVID. [*Relieved.*] I knew you would. You're Island born an' bred— [*He breaks off, going on in eager practical plans.*] The "Maypole's" old an' we'll be short-handed, but that don't matter, I'll get a better chance at the harpoonin' an' maybe we'll stop off the Indies or China an' I'll be bringing you the finest silk that's made——

EUNICE. [*Unheeding this.*] An' she sails with the tide to-morrow mornin'.

DAVID. Kind of short warnin', but I've got my chest ready. [*He loosens his hold gently and turns to go.*] Leave me go now to sign for the voyage. I'll be back by

the time you're through with the supper things. We can have two or three hours together 'fore I have to go aboard. [EUNICE *stares at him fixedly as he moves toward door.*]

EUNICE. [*Brokenly.*] David! [*He turns at her cry and goes back to her again.* EUNICE *clings to him and he kisses her again.*]

DAVID. Nobody like you, Eunice, nobody in the world.

EUNICE. [*Keeping back her tears with difficulty.*] Or you, David, I—I guess you were born for somethin' bigger'n a countin'-house. Guess I'd rather have you same's you are—[*she breaks off an shivers a little, then hurries on*] no matter what happens——

DAVID. [*Who has put her down gently and reached the door.*] Maybe if you was to wish me greasy luck I'd stand more chance o' havin' it, dear.

EUNICE. [*Turning toward him and struggling against her tears.*] Greasy luck to you!

[*He goes quickly out of the door without a backward glance.* EUNICE *stands staring after him, and only when she hears the front door bang, does she give way to her feelings. Then she sinks down on the sofa, crying with low, strangling sobs. She holds the stage thus for a moment before* COUSIN CHASE *appears in the doorway, where he stands silently watching her, his hat in one hand and his handkerchief evidently filled with one of the garden cucumber plants carefully balanced in the other. At sight of her tears, he tiptoes in, his old face full of concern.*

COUSIN CHASE. Why, Eunice whatever's come over you, child? [*She looks up but cannot answer.*] There ain't anything wrong? Where's David?

EUNICE. [*Brokenly.*] David's—gone.

COUSIN CHASE. [*Soothingly.*] Well, not very far I guess——

EUNICE. Far's any man can. [*Sitting up and trying to compose herself.*] He's gone to sign articles—for the "Maypole"—they're sailin' with the tide to-morrow mornin'——

COUSIN CHASE. [*Incredulously.*] The "Maypole." [*Full of concern and sympathy.*] Three years out. An' I thought he'd come round to my proposition. I thought between us we'd reasoned some sense into him. [*Patting her shoulder.*] I did my best, Eunice, an' I'm sorry, real sorry for you.

EUNICE. [*Pulling herself together with sudden spirit.*] Never mind 'bout that! I'm glad—[*She breaks off at his startled expression.*]

COUSIN CHASE. But I thought your heart was set on gettin' married?

EUNICE. An' so 'tis. 'Course I tried to make him stay —any girl would, but I'm proud he didn't just the same. [*With a triumphant upward tilt of her head.*] Whatever anybody says 'bout David Folger 'twon't be to call him one o' your stand-behind-the-counter, stay-ashore men!

COUSIN CHASE. [*Turning to go out again.*] Well, it does beat all how women are made!

[*He makes a little clicking sound under his breath and goes out shaking his head as if the whole species were beyond him.* EUNICE *sits till after he has gone. Her breath still comes short from her spasm of crying, but she has herself in hand now. She wipes her eyes determinedly and reaches for her work-basket. Mechanically she puts on her thimble and picks up the centre square of the Blowing Whale Quilt, smoothing it out on her knee before she begins to work on it. Outside*

the Crier's bell and call sound faintly, a word or two distinguishable now and again. EUNICE *is sewing quietly and with no indication of her recent struggle when the curtain falls.*

CURTAIN

THE NINE DAYS' QUEEN

AN HISTORICAL FANTASY IN ONE ACT

CHARACTERS

LADY JANE GREY, *The Nine Days' Queen of England*
NURSE ELLEN, *Her old Nurse and companion*
GODFREY, *of Dorsetshire*
SIR THOMAS BRYDGES, *Keeper of the Tower of London*
WILLIAM, *An old Guard of the Tower*
JOHN, *A young Guard of the Tower*
DICK, *Another young Guard of the Tower*

SCENE: LADY JANE'S *room in the Tower of London, the night before her execution* 1554.

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Note: In an old guide-book whose name I have forgotten there was an allusion to Lady Jane Grey feasting her keepers the night before her execution. The Tower of London guards are sceptical, but at least it is the sort of thing that might have happened—not an historical certainty.

THE NINE DAYS' QUEEN

SCENE: *A room in the Tower of London, dim-lit by candles set in high sconces. Shadowy and cheerless. There is a door back-centre, massive and showing a square-cut window in it, through which the corridor beyond may be seen through iron bars. This is all dimness. At one side of the room is a high window also heavily barred. Against the left wall a rude bed, with some garments spread out upon it. A chair is drawn near by in which an old woman* NURSE ELLEN *is seated sewing on a dress. On a shelf various bottles, plates, a basket of fruit and bread and other articles of food are laid out.*

In the centre of the room is a plain wooden table, covered with writing-materials and several books. A chair is beside it. At rise of curtain the LADY JANE GREY *is seated here, busily engaged in writing. She wears a dress of dark stuff, made after the rather elaborate fashion of the day with much puffing and quilting. It only accentuates her smallness of stature and youthfulness, for she is barely seventeen, pink and white and gold as an exquisite bit of porcelain, but with an air of gravity, determination and self-control far beyond her years.*

For a minute or two after the curtain's rise there is no sound but the scratching of her quill pen on the paper and the sighs and occasional half-suppressed sobs of NURSE ELLEN. LADY JANE *finishes her writing and sands the letters, folding it carefully and then looking over at the Nurse.*

LADY JANE GREY

The last one's finished. What's o'clock, good Ellen?

NURSE ELLEN. [*Sighing.*]

Well past eleven.

LADY JANE. [*Starting.*]

Why then they'll be here soon,
Sir Thomas and the three who've tended me
These long weeks past. They make their rounds at midnight.

[*The* NURSE *has laid down her work and rises with another sigh. When she speaks her voice is heavy from crying, and throughout the scene she can scarcely look at her mistress without her eyes filling.*

NURSE.

Fine folk indeed that cannot let you be
In peace on this last night!

LADY JANE

Nay, Ellen, nay,
They have been most considerate and kindly,
'Twas I who bid them come to sup with me
That in return for countless favors done
They share such food and hospitality
As I can offer. Come, good Ellen, help
Me set my little store in readiness.

[*She points to the things on the shelf and begins herself to gather the writing-materials from the table, preparing to bring over the food instead. The* NURSE *goes to help her, taking both of the girl's hands and looking long and sorrowfully into her face. They cling close for a moment.*

NURSE.

Why, child, how cold you are!

[*Resentfully.*

And they begrudge you even a fire's warmth!

LADY JANE. [*Quietly explaining.*]

They may not, Ellen. Fire can destroy
A body, and they've need of mine to-morrow.

NURSE. [*Breaking out crying afresh.*]

Dear God, that I should live to see the day,
My sweet young mistress and the prettiest babe
That ever nursed at these old breasts of mine,
That I should walk beside her to the scaffold.

LADY JANE. [*Tenderly wiping the other's eyes.*]

I knew that you would come to me again,
Who ever answered to my faintest call,
I knew you would not fail me at the last.

NURSE. [*Tearfully.*]

Nay that I'd not, my bird.

LADY JANE. [*Looking down at the* NURSE'S *hands still clasping hers.*]

And these same hands
That were the first to dress my little body,
To deck me for my wedding and the day
They set the crown of England on my head.

NURSE. [*Breaking in with feeling.*]

A thousand curses to it!

LADY JANE. [*Continuing.*]

I would not like
Other's to dress me at the last—before——

[*She breaks off.*

NURSE.

That ever it should come to this, and you
Scarce seventeen come Halloween.

LADY JANE. [*Half to herself.*]

'Tis strange
In seventeen short years to dress a body

For christening, marriage, coronation, dying—
I doubt that death itself can be more strange.

[*Hearing her say these words the* NURSE *sobs afresh and begins telling a story, evidently not for the first time.* LADY JANE *leaves her and moves to and fro between the shelf and the table, taking away the books and papers to make room for the food and bottles which she sets out, listening to the other half absently.*

NURSE.

I begged that they should take me in your stead,
On these old knees of mine I did entreat them.
"Oh, my sweet sirs," I said, "what can it matter
Which head falls, so the block is satisfied?
Mine's grey and hers is golden; take you mine,
For 'tis not right," I said, "nor natural neither,
That one so young should die; that's for the old.
I pray you if there's mercy in your hearts
To listen. I am but a simple creature,
My head's not wise enough to understand
Treason and such affairs of state, but I
Have lived a long time in this world and know
The look of innocence—'tis written on her.
Why, she has never known an evil thought
Since she was born. 'Twas all her father's doing—
A meddlesome and interfering man
That ever used this sweet child to advance
His own ambitious ends,——

LADY JANE. [*Quickly.*]

Hush, Ellen, I'll not have you speak so of him.
Come, help me spread this damask napkin smooth.
My banquet should be set on cloth of gold.
Still the wine's old and these be royal apples.
'Twas thoughtful of the Queen——

NURSE. [*Hotly.*]
That bloody tyrant!
I will not call her Queen though I should die
For't.

LADY JANE. [*Hastily.*]
Good Ellen, have a care
Spies lie in wait to catch the lightest whisper.
'Tis the Queen's ministers demand my death
And Guildford's. She was loath I hear to sign
The warrant, for her heart is kind withal
And underneath the popishness and pride
That rules it, I doubt she has not forgotten
The days when with her foster brother Edward,
Princess Elizabeth and she and I
Romped up and down the aisles of chestnut-trees
At Hampton Court, or with our books and music,
Embroidery and prattle gathered close
About the knees of good Queen Catherine Parr.
Aye, Mary must remember the old days
Else why should she have sent me with the wine
Seed-cakes and citron that I ever fancied?

[*She carries a plate of honey to table.*

Here's honey in the comb, all thick and golden
And oozing richness of a thousand blossoms
From those same palace gardens that were mine
For nine short days.

NURSE. [*Shaking her head.*]

Sure, 'tis beyond my understanding, child,
These ways of Queens; this courtly etiquette
That says—now such an one shall die and then
Forthwith must send that same unfortunate
Rare delicacies from the royal table
To tempt a poor, condemned soul's appetite.

Thank God, I come of simple stock that love
Or hate with undivided heart!

LADY JANE. [*Continuing without heeding her.*]

This very afternoon came messengers
With royal permit that I might see Guildford,
To take a last farewell of one another.

NURSE. [*Curiously.*]

You saw him then? You saw your husband, child?

LADY JANE.

Nay, Ellen, though I do confess I was
Most sorely tempted. Guildford craved to see
And hold me in his arms but once again.
Still, something warned me 'twould be our undoing.
Our wills are weak and human things at best;
Affection's dangerous—it steals our courage
And if we spend our little hoarded store
How shall we draw upon it at our need?
If Guildford's Soul is not in firmness set
Against to-morrow's hour,—where's the good?—
I cannot settle it with my own eyes,
No, nor confirm it with my words or lips.
Poor Guildford.

[*She sighs.*

NURSE. [*With show of spirit.*]

Talk not so to me of him!
'Twas an ill day that ever you were wedded!

LADY JANE. [*Protesting simply and with sincerity.*]

He has been true and loyal to the last.
Like me he was but made the instrument
Of family pride, of treachery and ambition.
'Twas not through him disaster fell upon us.

NURSE. [*Going on, half to herself.*]

He never had your heart. I always knew it.

LADY JANE. [*Low and a little wearily.*]

Perchance it was no longer mine to give.
I gave him all else, Ellen, I've been faithful.

NURSE. [*Continuing.*]

I guessed it long before you were betrothed.
If it had been young Master Godfrey now
That was our neighbor's son in Dorsetshire——

LADY JANE. [*With a little catch in her voice.*]

Talk not to me of Dorsetshire.

NURSE. [*Sadly reminiscent.*]

Sweet days,
When you two played in his good father's orchard.
I used to wonder did you think of it
When you were sent to learn the ways of court?

LADY JANE. [*Turning her face away quickly.*]

Aye, Ellen, often.

NURSE.

I thought 'twas so.

[*Again waxing reminiscent.*

Young Master Godfrey should have been your husband—
As fine a lad as ever whistled tunes
In Spring o' the year. As gay and brave and reckless
As any maid could wish for. But your father
Had grander plans—look where they've brought you to
And him beside!

LADY JANE. [*Wearily.*]

I pray you talk not of it.
My head is heavy with these "ifs" and "buts,"
And "had I not done this, but thus and so."
With useless whys and wherefores and regrets
And dull conjecturings.

[*She breaks off and studies the table.*

Now all's set out.

[*She removes the ink and pen.*

My letters wrote and sealed. Set them away,
I shall have no more need of pens and paper.

[*She hands several letters to* NURSE.

NURSE. [*Sighing as she carries letters to put with rest on shelf.*]

That weary writing! Would they'd never taught you
To make your pothooks. Where's the good they brought?
That Greek and Latin and philosophy
Good Master Roger Ascham taught you?

[*Piously.*

Rest his soul.

LADY JANE. [*With affectionate warmth.*]

God rest his soul, my kind, dear Master Ascham.
I do most gratefully give thanks for him.
If I had parents over sharp and stern
At least I knew the gentlest schoolmaster.

NURSE.

Aye, that he was, but see where all his learning
Brought him, and now his favorite scholar going
The self-same way. Think you they'd made you Queen
If you'd not known one letter from the next,
Or learned to write in all those languages?

LADY JANE. [*Gently.*]

My learning's been my consolation often.

NURSE. [*Stubbornly.*]

Without it you had lived in peace and quiet
In Dorsetshire, a place you should not ever
Have left, my sweet!

[*She regards* JANE *so sorrowfully, that the girl comes closer and rests her head on the* NURSE'S *shoulder, with an appealing, childish gesture.*

LADY JANE.

Oh, Ellen, all that's past.

It seems most like some strange and happy tale
Of other folk—that maid with mine own name
And eyes and hair and carriage—she's most strange
Of all and like a brightly colored picture
In some old book I read long, long ago.

NURSE. [*Smoothing her hair.*]
My sweet, my child.

[*With a sudden burst of feeling.*
Dear God, how can they bear
To touch one bright hair of this head, that's golder
Than any crown they ever set upon it?

LADY JANE. [*With a hint of panic in her voice.*]
Oh, Ellen, hold me closer, I do feel
A fear that chills and creeps about my heart—
I am so small a body and so timid,
If I should flinch or struggle when 'tis time—
I must not tremble, yet suppose my flesh
Will not obey me, or my nerves cry out—
Oh, Ellen, I am fearful of myself,
That I should not die as befits a Queen
Albeit but a nine days' one.

[*Suddenly she straightens, pulls herself together, speaking in a quiet, matter of fact voice.*
Come, how's my robe?

NURSE. [*Pointing to the bed.*]
Ready upon your couch,
And fairly mended too. I wove a pattern
Of golden threads, there's not a soul could tell
'Twas patched beneath.

[*She brings the dress over and holds it out for inspection. It is of bright blue velvet, puffed and embroidered elaborately.* LADY JANE *examines it with interest.*

LADY JANE.

Why see how cunningly you've hid the place.
Now I shall have no need to be ashamed
Of my attire. Come, I will put it on,
In honor of my guests and to make sure
All's as it should be.

[*She begins to unfasten the one she wears, the* NURSE *helping her. Presently she stands a pathetically diminutive and childish figure in her stiff, tight-fitting underbody of white material. She smooths the velvet thoughtfully and with satisfaction as the* NURSE *helps her into it.*

I wonder if 'tis vanity alone
Makes it more easy for a maid to die
Knowing her linen's fresh and that her robe
Is fashioned all of velvet and becomes her?

NURSE.

No lass but's born for beauty, come what may,
And there's the pity of it.

[*She sighs and wipes her eyes carefully lest a falling tear harm the dress.*

LADY JANE. [*As* NURSE *bends over the fastenings.*]
'Twas ever my most favorite color—blue.
London was gay with streamers of like shade
The day they crowned me. I remember one—
A knot of ribbon fluttering from the casement
Of a high window hard by Tower Gate.
I saw it from the coach that carried me
To Coronation. Still it fluttered there
Waving forgotten when they brought me back
A prisoner. 'Twill be torn and faded now
If still it hangs there. I will look to-morrow.
Strange if a little knotted bit of ribbon

Could so survive a lost cause and the Queen
For whom 'twas set.

[*There is a slight pause as the* NURSE *continues to fasten the dress.* JANE *touches the lace at the neck meaningly.*

The collar should be loosened.
Look you how close it binds my throat about.
'Tis far too tight. I should not like my hands
To fumble when the time comes to unclasp it
And have them think——

[*She breaks off, pointing to the place where she wishes it opened wider.*

Now if 'twere opened here,
I could make bare my throat more easily.

[*She goes through a quick motion that completely upsets the* NURSE, *who drops her hands and sobs.*

NURSE.

Dear God, I cannot do it. No, I cannot!

[*Just at this moment a step sounds without in the corridor. A key is turned in the lock and a man in the uniform of one of the Tower Guards enters. He stands close to the door and his face is in shadow. He speaks shortly.*

LADY JANE. [*Turning quickly.*]
Who's there? What would you of me?

GUARD. [*Gruffly.*]
Madam, my orders be to remove the Nurse.

LADY JANE. [*Courteous but puzzled.*]
Why 'tis most strange, the order was she should
Attend me all this night and on the morrow.
I had Sir Thomas Brydges' word of mouth.

NURSE.

Aye, that she had.

GUARD. [*Surlily.*]

I know not aught of that, my orders call
For her removal to another room
Till morning.

NURSE. [*Indignantly.*]

I will not stir one single step o' the way!

LADY JANE. [*To* NURSE.]

Hush, Ellen, do not anger him, I pray you.

[*To the* GUARD.

You have not served me, Sir, before to-night,
I do not know you.

GUARD. [*Still gruff.*]

Why how should you, Madame?
The Tower is ever filled with added guards
Upon the eve of such an execution,
And those whose usual duty 'twas to serve you
Are busied otherwise.

[LADY JANE *is seen to shiver ever so slightly at his words and their intimation, but she signals the* NURSE *to be quiet and continues calmly.*

LADY JANE.

Most natural—there must be many tasks
To do ere sunrise. Of your graciousness
I beg this favor that you'll leave my Nurse
To bear me company.

GUARD. [*Without moving or looking up.*]

I cannot grant it.

[*To the* NURSE.

Come now, good Woman.

NURSE. [*Protesting.*]

I'll not go, I tell you.
I have permission. I'll stand by my rights.
I will not leave my child on her last night
And you may take yourself off to your mates.

LADY JANE [*Urging* NURSE *to the door.*]
Do as he bids you, Ellen, that is best.
For he's a newcomer and does not know
My privileges. When Sir Thomas comes
To sup here with the rest, he will recall
His promise, then you shall be fetched again,
So go now without more ado, my dear.

NURSE. [*Following* GUARD *out and muttering.*]
You'll hear of this ere long, you blundering fool!

[*They go out and for a brief space* LADY JANE *is alone. She returns to the table and rearranges the fruit in its dish. A dull sound of hammering comes from beyond the window. She listens to its dull beat, half fearful, half fascinated, speaking softly under her breath.*

LADY JANE.
Guildford, my Husband, do you hear it too?

[*She still stands listening with her back to the door and so does not see it open softly and the* GUARD *enter again. Noiselessly he turns the key and advances. His whole manner is changed. From surliness, he is now all eager solicitude. Under the feathered cap of his uniform (the Beefeaters) his face shows, handsome and boyish, full of intense pity and concern as he watches the girl before him. She is not aware of his presence till he is close beside her. Then as she turns he lays a warning finger to his lips, signalling quiet.*

LADY JANE. [*In an incredulous whisper.*]
Godfrey!

GODFREY. [*Quickly.*]
I pray you make no outcry, Jane!

LADY JANE.
Dear God, what does this mean? You in the Tower,

In jailor's dress? You are not of the Guards,
How came you by them?

GODFREY.

'Twas most dangerous business
To reach you—still a guard's dress and his silence
Are things which may be purchased for a price.

LADY JANE. [*Touching his sleeve half fearfully as he draws her to him.*]

Oh, Godfrey, can it be that you are real?
Say you are real, my dear, and not the shadow
Of my poor harassed, memory-haunted brain?

GODFREY. [*Drawing her closer.*]

Do these arms grip like shadows? Let them fight
And you shall see.

LADY JANE. [*Relaxing in his arms.*]

Oh, Godfrey, 'twill come harder now to die
Since I have seen your face and felt your arms
About me after all these weary months.

GODFREY. [*Kissing her.*]

My dear,
Could you not guess I should contrive some means
To reach you though the risk be desperate?
I shall not rest till you are safe in France.

LADY JANE. [*Wonderingly.*]

In France! Dear Godfrey, surely you are mad.
This is no time to talk of France, when I
Have scarce ten hours left of life.

GODFREY. [*Quickly.*]

And so I tell you 'tis no time for words.
I dared not even keep old Ellen here
Lest by her very love and zeal she might
Arouse suspicion and undo my plan.
[*Pointing to table.*
Why is a feast spread? What's this talk of guests?

LADY JANE.

'Tis fitting I should entertain my keepers
With such small stores as I can offer them.
I would not have it said the Lady Jane
So far gave way to grief she was unmindful
Of the demands of common courtesy
Toward those whose care she's been for many weeks.
They will be coming ere the midnight watch,
[*Suddenly frightened.*
Oh, Godfrey, go—if they should find you here——

GODFREY.

Well, they'll not find me—no, nor you, my dear.
A hundred times I've planned how it should be:
The guard who keeps the door below is friendly.
He's tried and well instructed. He will pass
Us through, unlock an unused gate that leads
Down to the river and my waiting barge.
'Tis but a little row to where a vessel
Lies waiting for the word to spread her canvas
And point her prows to France, my Jane, and Freedom.

LADY JANE. [*Sadly.*]

Oh, talk not of it. I have quite forgot
The very sound o' the word. I think the stars
By which they say our destinies are kept
Witheld that rare commodity from me
Since ever I was born. I am most like
Those little birds reared in captivity,
Accustomed to the narrowness of cages,
Albeit they be golden ones and hung
In palaces.

GODFREY. [*Tenderly touching her hair.*]

My little golden bird
Shall be the freest of them all in France.
We two shall walk in safe, green woods together

And orchards, though they be not Dorset ones.
But, quick, there's not a moment. Guards are changed
At midnight, 'twill be useless after that.
My helper leaves his post then. All is lost
If we be not away by twelve o' the clock.
So come, my dear, make haste, make haste!

LADY JANE.

And what
Of my Lord Guildford? Would you have me leave him
To face the block alone? No, Godfrey, no.

GODFREY.

There is no other way. I cannot save him.
I swear to God I would, if I were able,
Though I have hated him with all my heart
Once on a time—the day you two were wedded—
That church and crown and state should be preserved,
Or so folk said. [*He laughs bitterly.*] I would have killed him then,
I'd save him now if 'twere not certain death
For all of us, to reach his guarded room.

LADY JANE. [*Incredulously.*]

You'd have me leave my husband here to meet
A death that had not been his, but for me?

GODFREY. [*Arguing desperately.*]

You cannot save him if you stay, that's certain.
He would be first to see the logic of it.

LADY JANE. [*Quietly, but with deep conviction.*]

I need not logic now, but loyalty.
Had Guildford been less loyal he might be
A free soul now. I'll not forget my part.
It will not matter in a little while
Whether I loved with part or all my heart,
But that we shared like fates and both were faithful
That will mean much, I think.

[*She breaks off suddenly in a revulsion of feeling as she clings to him passionately.*

Oh, Godfrey, do not tempt me with such thoughts.
Help me to put them from me lest I waver,
For I do love thee. 'Tis no shame to say it
At such a moment. Oh, my dear, my love!

[*She clings closer to him and feeling her weaken in his arms,* Godfrey *urges her toward door. But she holds back.*

Let us not waste these precious little moments
Snatched from the slipping sands so nearly spent
And gone from my small life's brief hour glass.

Godfrey. [*Desperately.*]

Does life mean such a little thing to you
That you can toss it carelessly away?
I tell you I can save you, dearest Jane.

Lady Jane.

You do not understand. I must keep faith
Not only with my living husband Guildford,
And my good keepers who should pay most dearly,
But with those other English Queens who died
On Tower Green where I shall die to-morrow.
Have you forgot how Anne Boleyn went forth
Singing the death song she had made herself?

Godfrey. [*Interrupting.*]

Oh, God, what can I do to make her save
Her fair young body from this butchery?

[*Sound of steps without, far down in corridor* Lady Jane *starts.*

Lady Jane.

I hear steps fall far down the corridor.
You must away and hide yourself, my Godfrey,
Or they will take you too. I could not rest

In peace and quiet, knowing that you suffered
For love of me.

[*She kisses him hurriedly and pushes him toward the door.*

Go now, my blessing's on you,
And all my love.

GODFREY. [*At the door.*]

I will not give you up.
I'll wait without, hid well within the shadow.
One sign from you; one signal at the door,
And I'll be here to unlock and let you through.
It were an easy thing when they be gathered
About your table, to make fast the door
And so to leave them prisoners in your stead.
There would be time for us to gain the barge
Ere their cries roused alarm through these thick walls.

LADY JANE. [*Shaking her head, and pushing him to the door.*]

Go, Godfrey, go and not another word
Or your life's forfeit.

[*He opens the door and hurries out.* LADY JANE *breathes more easily, though she is still trembling from the scene. She moves over to the shelf and takes down the package of letters and the books. Presently voices and steps sound without. Another key turns in the lock and four men enter. The first of these, the oldest and most richly dressed is* SIR THOMAS BRYDGES, *keeper of the Tower, behind him come the three guards, simpler, rougher types in their uniforms. One of them is middle-aged, a wiry, gray-haired man, the other two are younger, round-cheeked country yeomen.* LADY JANE *advances to meet them, graciously and with a charming combination of*

dignity and girlish friendliness. SIR THOMAS *responds with courtly kindness, bowing low before her, while the other three stand in an awkward little group, evidently ill at ease.*

LADY JANE.

Sir Thomas Brydges. [*To the others.*] And my three good keepers,
I take it as most gracious that you come
To my poor banquet. You are more than welcome.

[*The three bow jerkily, while* SIR THOMAS *bends to kiss the hand she holds out.*

SIR THOMAS. [*Formally.*]

How does the Lady Jane to-night?

LADY JANE.

Why, well,
I thank, Sir Thomas, soon my health will cease
To be one more concern to tax my Lord's
Most kindly heart. I pray you will be seated
Provided there be benches for you all.

[*She smiles, and the keepers, glad to do something, hurry to bring forward the* NURSE'S *chair and a couple of rude stools.*

SIR THOMAS.

Why, how now, where's the Nurse that came to tend you?
The same I gave my word to she should stay
So long as you had need of services?

LADY JANE. [*Quickly.*]

'Tis Mistress Ellen that you mean? She was
So wearied out with weeping that I bade
The guard conduct her to a near-by room
Where she might catch a little sleep. Poor Soul,
She was in most sore need.

SIR THOMAS.

True, true, 'tis often thus as I have noticed

Those who would come to comfort, do receive
Courage and cheerfulness from the condemned.

OLDEST OF THE THREE, WILLIAM.

Aye, so it is.

ANOTHER GUARD, JOHN.

I've often marvelled at it.

SIR THOMAS.

The message to your husband, I delivered
With my own hands some hours past. He seemed
Most calm and reconciled. He bade me say
To-morrow he will pass beneath your window
Proceeding to the scaffold on the Green,
And he would take it kindly if you waved
Your handkerchief in signal of your blessing.

LADY JANE. [*Forcing back the emotion she feels.*]

I shall be there to wave him my farewell.

[*Holding out letters and books.*

These books and letters I give to your keeping.
You'll find instructions as to their disposal.

[SIR THOMAS *puts them in a great leather pouch he carries.*

SIR THOMAS.

All shall be done according to your wishes.
I make myself responsible in person
For their delivery. So set your mind
At peace.

LADY JANE.

I pray you, let us all be seated.

[*She takes chair at head of table.*

Sir Thomas at my right. Good William here.
Tall John upon my left, and Dick beside him.

[*They settle themselves while she goes on with ease and graciousness.*

Now we are come together—let's forget

What's done, and what will be done, but give thanks
That in grave peril and adversity
'Tis pleasant and most comforting to find
Kind hearts about one—friendly hands to serve
And such great thoughtfulness and courtesy
As you have shown us all these nights and days.

SIR THOMAS. [*With deep feeling.*]

Why how could it be otherwise, my child?
Did you believe us stones that could not feel
Or stir at sight of beauty like your own
Caught in such dire distress—so brave and gentle,
So grateful for the smallest kindness done?

JOHN.

We be but human for all we be jailors.

WILLIAM. [*Nodding.*]

With wives to keep and children's mouths to feed,
And one must pick a living where one can.

DICK. [*Sullenly.*]

The work is hateful and not of my choosing.

SIR THOMAS. [*Rebuking him.*]

'Tis work that must be done.

LADY JANE.

Aye, so it must,
I hope that all poor prisoners may find
Such kindly keepers at their time of need.

[*She passes the cakes and fruit, and points to the meat and bread and wine.*

Come, here's good venison and potted meat,
If you've a knife to cut it. Bread and cakes
And wine to be uncorked.

[*She hands things about while they busy themselves over the food. Twice during this scene* GODFREY *passes the door, pressing his face close to the bars at the opening. His face is turned to* JANE *in*

eager entreaty. The second time she sees him. Their eyes meet but she gives no sign and he is forced to turn away lest the others see him.

LADY JANE.

The port is old,
I have but the one goblet, we must drink,
In turn, I fear.

SIR THOMAS.

Then some day I shall tell my grandchildren
I shared a cup with the martyred Lady Jane,
And from henceforth my earnest prayers shall be
That my young daughter, if she lives, may grow
Into a lady half so sweet and brave.

LADY JANE. [*Touched by his words.*]

May heaven bless you, good Sir Thomas Brydges,
You and your children. May you win high honor
And every joy that your kind heart deserves.

[*Turning to the others.*

And to you all I wish long life and health.

JOHN. [*Forgetful, speaks up*]

The same be yours, my Lady.

[*He stops abashed. The others too are silent, embarrassed at his break.*

LADY JANE.

Nay, do not beg my pardon, for good wishes
Were never known to harm a body yet.

[*At this moment the hammering sounds again.*

SIR THOMAS. [*Starts guiltily.*]

Madam, I do make my apologies
For such annoyance. But there's no help for it,
'Twill not last long now, that I can assure you.

LADY JANE.

What the law orders must be carried out.
I pray you will not let it trouble you.

DICK.

I swear it takes my appetite away.

JOHN.

And mine [*looking at* LADY JANE], and she's not touched
a mouthful though
I put the best before her.

WILLIAM. [*Low.*]

'Tis no wonder,
At such a time. I never saw her like
In all the executions I have seen.

[*Hammering continues steadily without.*

LADY JANE.

I would that there were minstrels who might drown it
With pretty tunes and pleasant melodies
From viols and fiddles. If I had my lute—
But that's gone, too. Sure 'tis a sorry banquet
Can boast no music. I have but my voice
That is a puny, piping thing. Still I
Will raise it, if you'd have me, gentle Sirs?

SIR THOMAS.

Why, should you feel so moved we'd be most honored.
But do not tire yourself to give us pleasure.

LADY JANE.

Why should I not? What will my breath avail me?
I had far rather make our feast more merry
Than aught else I could do. What shall I sing?

JOHN.

None of your Greek or Latin ditties, Madam.

DICK.

Nor French ones, neither. Sing an English tune.

SIR THOMAS.

For learnéd ladies that's more difficult
Than all the foreign ballads put together.

LADY JANE. [*Considering.*]

I mind how there was one the milkmaids sang
Each Spring in Dorsetshire. I loved it well
And listened for it every April evening
When they led home the cows at milking time,
Or later danced their rounds at rise of moon.
'Twas thus it ran—or I am much mistaken.

[*She begins to sing in a high, sweet, almost childishly piping voice to a simple air. Underneath it the hammering still sounds, dull and monotonous like a sort of distant accompaniment. Before she has finished the first verse,* GODFREY'S *face appears at the grating, white and agonized as he listens. The other men are too absorbed watching the singer to notice him.*

LADY JANE. [*Singing.*]

"All in this pleasant evening, together come are we,
For the summer springs so fresh, green and gay,
We tell you of a blossoming and buds on every tree,
Drawing near unto the merry month of May.

God bless this house and arbour, your riches and your store,
For the summer springs so fresh, green and gay,
We hope the Lord will prosper you, both now and evermore,
Drawing near unto the merry month of May.

Rise up, the master of this house, put on your charm of gold,
For the summer springs so fresh, green and gay,
Be not in pride offended for your name we make so bold,
Drawing near unto the merry month of May.

Rise up, the mistress of this house, with gold along your breast,
For the summer springs so fresh, green and gay,
And if your body be asleep, we hope your soul's at rest,

[*As she sings this line, the irony of its meaning sweeps over her and she falters for a moment. Her eye falls upon* Godfrey's *face at the door, and she can hardly go on. It is plain he believes this a signal and is only waiting for a sign from her. But she does not give it, and with an effort she controls herself and finishes the refrain:*

Drawing near unto the merry month of May.

And now comes we must leave you, in peace and plenty here,
For the summer springs so fresh, green and gay,
We shall not sing you May again until another year,
Drawing near unto the merry month of May.

[Godfrey *has remained at the door, and as she finishes singing he unlocks it noiselessly, sliding it open a crack.* Lady Jane *is aware of this but gives no outward sign, more than the slightest shake of her head. The others are moved by the song, especially* Sir Thomas.

Sir Thomas.

As sweet a tune as ever I shall hear.

William.

I mind my mother sang one very like it,
For all that she was Devon born and raised.

Lady Jane.

I am right glad that it should find your favor.

[*The door swings to silently.*

But you've not touched a drop of this good wine.

SIR THOMAS. [*Gallantly.*]

'Twill taste the sweeter should you pour it for-us.

LADY JANE.

Why that I'll do most gladly.

[SIR THOMAS *holds the goblet while she takes the leathern flagon and begins to pour.*

DICK.

'Tis a marvel

How he can eat and drink or jest with her!

WILLIAM.

Why, out of courtesy, my lad, he must.

JOHN.

The wine's good and by drinking it we please her,

So where's the wrong?

[*The clock begins striking midnight and they all start at the sound.* LADY JANE *trembling so that she spills some of the wine.*

SIR THOMAS.

Twelve o' the clock!

[*He takes the flagon from* LADY JANE.

Why, how your hands do tremble!

We must not tarry longer.

[*He rises as do the other three.* LADY JANE *glances fearfully toward the door from whose opening* GODFREY'S *face has so lately disappeared. Her breath comes quickly and she holds out both hands in a little frightened gesture of appeal.*

LADY JANE.

Nay, good Sirs,

I do beseech you not to leave me yet.

SIR THOMAS.

The guard is changing now and I must hasten

Below to see that there is no confusion
With shift of post and all these newcomers
Throughout the Tower. There is much to do——

[LADY JANE, *with another look toward the door, begins to fence for time as she sees* Sir THOMAS *gathering up his things to go.*

LADY JANE.

But surely you'll not leave till we have drunk
A toast together, for no banquet's done
Till host and guests have wished each other health,
I pray you stay—'tis no great boon to ask.

WILLIAM. [*Looking at* SIR THOMAS.]

I have no wish to seem unmannerly.

DICK.

Nor I.

[*The three look questioningly at* SIR THOMAS, *who hesitates.*

LADY JANE. [*Persuasively.*]

To pledge a health was never lengthy matter,
See, here's the goblet, ready-filled and waiting.

[*She holds it out.*

SIR THOMAS. [*Yielding.*]

'Twould be most churlish of me to deny
So small a favor, asked so graciously.

[*He seats himself again motioning the others back to their places.*

LADY JANE. [*With evident relief.*]

I thank you from my heart. Now let us drink
Good health, long life, and honor to Sir Thomas.

[*She lifts the goblet, barely touches it to her lips before passing it on to the one beside her.* SIR THOMAS *bows as each toasts him.*

JOHN. [*Drinking.*]

To Sir Thomas.

[*He passes it to* WILLIAM *who repeats and drinks.*

WILLIAM.

Sir Thomas.

[*He passes it to* DICK *who follows suit.*

DICK.

Sir Thomas.

[*Passes it back to* LADY JANE, *who refills it. They go through the same ceremony.*

LADY JANE.

I pledge my faithful John, his health and comfort
In all the days to come.

JOHN. [*Bobbing his head awkwardly.*]

I thank thee, Madam,
'Twas most kindly spoken.

[SIR THOMAS *and the others drink in turn, each pledging him by name.*

LADY JANE. [*Refilling goblet.*]

For William's health and fortune and his household's.

[*They go through the ceremony as before.*

LADY JANE. [*Again filling goblet up.*]

May Dick know health and every joy in life.

[*They repeat the toast, but this time the goblet does not return to* LADY JANE. SIR THOMAS *refills it, then turns to her, hesitating as he holds it up.*

SIR THOMAS.

Now 'tis your turn. How would you have us pledge you?

LADY JANE. [*Simply.*]

Why, drink to England and whoever's Queen
Whether she rule for nine short days or half
A century.

SIR THOMAS. [*Holding the goblet high.*]
The Queen's Health!

LADY JANE. [*Inclining her head in acknowledgment and speaking softly.*]
God save the Queen!

[SIR THOMAS *drinks and passes the goblet to the others. They are drinking from it as the curtain falls.*

THE END

"THE LONDONDERRY AIR"

A PLAY OF THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY

CHARACTERS

The Bound-Out Girl
The Peddler
The Widow Boggs
Hiram, the Widow Boggs' Son

Scene:—*A New England Kitchen in the early eighteen-hundreds.*

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"THE LONDONDERRY AIR"*

SCENE: *The kitchen of a remote New England farm-house. It is a bright, sunshiny morning in the Fall and a girl is rolling out dough at a table centre—a young girl in a plain, quaintly made calico dress and apron. Her hair is very red and she is not pretty according to the plump, pink and white edicts of her day. She is light and quick of motion as she steps about from the table to an old brick oven, part of the great open fireplace which occupies most of the back wall. A crane and kettle hang there, and various pots and pans are piled in a sink, or on another table near by; there are also a couple of chairs. A churn stands in one corner, some bits of blue and white china on shelves, and a red geranium in the window. A door right leads outdoors; this stands half open when the curtain rises. The door opposite leads into another room of the house.*

GIRL. [*Singing with cheerful unconcern.*]

"Hark from the tombs a doleful sound—"

[*She punctuates the words by thumps with her rolling-pin.*

My ears attend the cry.
Ye living men come view the ground
Where you must shortly lie."

*Irish folk melody, lately adapted for stringed quartet or violin.

[*There is a knock at the door and a brown face suddenly peers round it. It is a thin face, with twinkling dark eyes and a shock of wild black hair. It is followed by a thin body in shabby clothes.*

MAN. [*In a rich voice with a hint of brogue and a lingering relish over each phrase.*] Good day to you, Lady of the House, though it's a queer sort of a tune you do be singing.

GIRL. 'Tisn't a tune, Mister, it's a hymn.

MAN. It is, more's the pity, I'm thinking the Lord God himself wouldn't want to be claiming such a poor one.

GIRL. [*Shocked.*] Oh, dear, you hadn't ought to say things like that.

MAN. It's the truth, and I can speak it as well as the next one, though when it comes to lying I can do better nor most. [*He has pushed door wide and is half in.*]

GIRL. [*Fearfully.*] If you're a tramp, you mustn't come in.

MAN. [*Taking a step farther.*] But I am in, Colleen.

GIRL. Then you must go right out again. The Widow Boggs doesn't like tramps.

MAN. Oh, doesn't she now, it's a thousand pities.

GIRL. It's her kitchen and you can't stay in it.

MAN. [*Persuasively.*] Well, now I could be taking a bite on the doorstep. [*He points behind him.*]

GIRL. And I'm not to give victuals to any as asks.

MAN. I haven't been asking for any. [*He eyes her carefully.*] It's a queer thing now, a young slip of a girl like you singing of death and the tomb on a fine September morning.

GIRL. [*Glancing toward window.*] I expect it is a nice morning. I've been too busy to go farther'n the back stoop.

MAN. There's a shine on every leaf and grass-blade that would be blindin' the two eyes in your head.

GIRL. [*Admiring in spite of her scruples.*] I never heard a tramp talk like you before.

MAN. [*Grinning.*] Sure, an' there never was one the like o' me before. [*He draws a step nearer.*] Did you ever think o' that now, Colleen—this great ball of a world ploughing it's way through space and the centuries an' never two creatures the same, never at all, at all?

GIRL. [*Wonderingly.*] Why, no, I never did. It's kind of solemn-sounding, like the Bible when the Reverend Simpson reads it Sundays. [*Suddenly she begins to sniff, remembering the cookies in the oven.*] Oh, mercy me, that batch'll be burned to a crisp! [*She leaves him to dart over to the Dutch oven, taking out pan ruefully. Man draws nearer and also sniffs.*] Oh, my, they're black as anything.

MAN. [*Peering at them.*] I don't suppose you'd be letting me taste a few. I've got no objection to a little healthy char, especially when I made my breakfast of green apples four hours back.

GIRL. [*Hesitating as she brings pan to table.*] There couldn't be any harm in that exactly. [*She sets them down before him.*] Only you mustn't pass on the word you got anything. We don't hold with tramps round here.

MAN. [*Seating himself comfortably to eat.*] Not even when they've got a pack o' goods to peddle? [*He points to the one he has left on door-step.*]

GIRL. [*Eyeing it curiously.*] The Widow Boggs says a peddler will always try to cheat you, but I like to see what they have in their packs.

MAN. [*Eating cookies with relish.*] Let you be giving me a sup from that pan of milk yonder and I'll show you the lot with pleasure.

GIRL. [*Falling more and more under his spell.*] It's only buttermilk left from churning. I dassent give you

any other, for the Widow set the morning's herself. But you can have all o' this, I was just carryin' it out to the pig. [*She brings it over.*]

MAN. [*Helping himself.*] Now I wouldn't be the man to rob a pig. A pig's a fine animal for all any one may say, and a gifted one too. Did you ever hear how a pig is able to see the wind?

GIRL. [*Shaking her head.*] No.

MAN. It's as true as the nose on your face and in Ireland they do be holding the pig in great reverence for it.

GIRL. [*Laughing out suddenly.*] 'Twould be funny if our old sow could! But how can you be sure?

MAN. [*Reprovingly.*] Just because I don't be havin' wisdom enough to understand a pig's talk, I wouldn't be doubtin' its powers.

GIRL. [*Considering the matter.*] Hiram isn't like that. He doubts everything till he can prove it's so.

MAN. [*Pausing in his meal.*] Sure, an' it must be a very dull life he leads himself! Who might he be now, Colleen?

GIRL. He's the Widow Boggs' son.

MAN. An' it's a poor kind of a pair they must be makin', not that I intend criticising your relations after you treatin' me so pleasant.

GIRL. They're not my relations. [*She hesitates and goes on a bit self-consciously.*] Leastways not yet, they ain't.

MAN. [*Regarding her curiously.*] Well, then, what would you be doing in their kitchen and you no kin at all?

GIRL. [*Explaining as she rolls out more cookies.*] I've been the Widow Boggs' Bound-Girl for goin' on nine years. She took me from Cranberry Common when I was ten an' my folks died. I've been workin' for her ever since to earn my board an' keep an' clothes.

MAN. [*Shrewdly.*] I'm thinkin' the Widow Boggs is a woman to drive a sharp bargain, but what about this son of hers?

GIRL. [*Shyly, pausing in her work.*] Hiram an' me are goin' to get married soon's the crops are all in.

MAN. Is that the truth now? An' what sort of a man is he?

GIRL. [*Proudly, but with no great show of enthusiasm.*] Oh, he's very steady an' dependable. I'm lucky, every one thinks—what with bein' only a Bound-Out Girl an' havin' red hair into the bargain. [*She smooths an escaping lock from her forehead.*]

MAN. Sure, an' 'tis great glory on your head, Colleen, didn't you be knowin' that?

GIRL. [*Wonderingly.*] No, Mister, it's not considered that hereabouts. But Hiram says he'll overlook it seein' I'm broke to his ways, an' the Widow Boggs says maybe if I don't go runnin' out bareheaded in the sun an' if I comb it night an' mornin' with an iron comb, maybe in time it'll darken to a decent shade.

MAN. God forbid! In the old country they do be callin' it a Queen's Color. My own Grandmother had the same—God rest her soul! [*He crosses himself piously, then continues with relish.*] Many's the time I've heard her tell how 'twas held to be a sign of blessing from the Fairy Folk themselves, an' the redder it was the more power you would be havin' over them.

GIRL. If I told that to Hiram an' the Widow they'd never believe me.

MAN. [*Philosophically, taking another cooky.*] Then it would be a waste o' good breath.

GIRL. [*Sighing and cutting out more cookies.*] Maybe it would be, Mister.

MAN. [*Curiously.*] An' why would they be leavin' you to keep the house here by yourself?

GIRL. [*In matter-of-fact tones.*] Oh, they've gone to Mis' Sally Robbins' funeral a couple of miles down the road. But I couldn't leave the bakin'.

[*The* MAN *gives a dramatic start in his chair.*

MAN. [*Solemnly.*] Is it the truth you're tellin' me, Colleen?

GIRL. [*Surprised.*] Why, yes, Mister, they never like to miss a funeral.

MAN. [*Wagging his head wisely.*] I might have known it. The third sign to-day.

GIRL. [*Curiously.*] What sign?

MAN. [*Impressively.*] Did you never hear how the first person you'll be talking to on the road to a funeral is bound to be bringing you great good fortune?

GIRL. [*Shaking her head.*] No, an' I've been to funerals and funerals.

MAN. [*Easily.*] Then you were never meeting with the right person, surely. [*Continuing.*] An' maybe you'll be tellin' me what day o' the month it is, in case I might be wrong in my own calculations.

GIRL. It's the thirteenth o' September. I know it 'count o' the funeral an' because Hiram said we'd better be settin' our weddin'-day for a month from now.

MAN. [*Wagging his head.*] Then I made no mistake. The Thirteenth it is an' that's my lucky day, Colleen. My Grannie read it in the stars, an' me a bit of a lad squattin' cross-legged before the peat fire in County Clare. "Michael O'Donovan Patrick Sweeney," says she, "there's luck for you in the thirteenth day of the month as long as there's breath in your body. Born on the thirteenth you were an' wedded on the thirteenth you'll be." I was mindin' myself of her words this very mornin' as I took up my pack

an' started off. But that wasn't the only sign, for I hadn't so much as made the first turning when what should I see in a field but a great black cow. Stock still she stood, starin' at me, an' not so much as one white hair from the horns of her head to her switchin' tail.

GIRL. That must have been Squire Sawyer's old black Betsy.

MAN. It's rare good fortune to meet with an all-black cow an' when it's the thirteenth day o' the month as well, there's sure to be something more nor common in it.

GIRL. I'm glad you told me. I'll watch out from now on. [*She carries pan of cookies to the oven.*]

MAN. [*Watching her more and more approvingly.*] You've a light foot, I see [*he points to it*], an' a well-turned ankle. I'm thinkin' you can dance better nor most?

GIRL. [*Pleased, but firm.*] We don't hold with dancin' much in these parts. Folks think it's sinful besides bein' a waste o' time an' shoe-leather.

MAN. [*Snorting.*] An' that's all they know about it, bad cess to the lot of them. Did you never read in the Bible how King David himself danced before the Lord?

GIRL. [*Doubtfully.*] But that was a long time ago. Times has changed.

MAN. I'm thinkin' the Lord God's not grown tired of a light foot an' a good bit of a tune. [*To her.*] Don't you be likin' to hear one yourself now?

GIRL. I'm very fond of music. [*Confidingly.*] Hiram's promised me a melodian, so's I can learn to play hymns on it this winter.

MAN. [*Scornfully.*] Hymns, is it? I'll teach you better nor that, Colleen. [*Eagerly.*] Tunes, why my head's ringin' with them day an' night. I've only to pick them the same as you would be gatherin' berries off a bush. There isn't a mood you'd be havin' on you, but I

could be findin' a tune to suit it. An' what's a melodian compared to a fiddle but the light a tallow candle would make an' it gutterin' in the face of the moon?

GIRL. [*Wistfully.*] Do you carry your fiddle in your pack, Mister?

MAN. [*Rising.*] Let you listen an' I'll be playin' you the one they do be callin' "The Londonderry Air." [*He goes to the door-step, opens his pack and returns with an old fiddle, which he begins to tune, talking as he tightens and plucks at the strings.*] You won't be hearing the like of it anywhere nowadays. It's an old tune and a stolen tune, for they say Blind Shemus Dougherty brought it back an' he spendin' seven years along o' the Fairies in the burnin' hill. It's merry and sad and queer an' there's magic in it, Colleen, for them that have the heart to hear.

GIRL. [*Wonderingly.*] But don't folks hear with their ears, Mister?

MAN. [*Fitting fiddle to his chin.*] It's only them as listens with the heart that hears the true Magic. An' a heart does be needin' music the same as the grass does be needin' rain.

[*He draws the bow across the strings and plays the haunting strains of the "Londonderry Air," now gay and quick like an old reel, now low and minor and lingering. He sways to the rhythms as he plays, and his eyes never leave the girl's face as she stands spellbound before him, her two little floury hands clasped rapturously upon her calico chest. As the tune ends she draws a deep breath and turns half-dazed shining eyes to him.*

GIRL. [*Softly.*] Oh, Mister, 'twas like everythin' in the world an' more beside.

MAN. [*Approvingly.*] Then you listened with the

heart, Colleen. Every little note it did be fallin' upon it like a sweet rain.

GIRL. [*Still wondering.*] Yes, it watered my heart. I could feel it. [*She presses her hands there.*] I knew what the music meant as long as you played, but now I can't remember. Only, nothin'll ever be the same again now I've heard it.

MAN. [*Putting down fiddle.*] You'll be knowin' I speak the truth when I tell you a fiddle's better nor a melodian. Isn't it so, now? [*He turns to her questioningly.*] I might be makin' so bold as to call you by name, if I could be knowin' of it?

GIRL. [*Still under the music's spell.*] Martha Rose.

MAN. Sure it's pretty an' suits you well, only I'd be turnin' it round about an' call you Rose Martha, if I had my way.

GIRL. Hiram likes plain Martha best, so I'll be leaving out the Rose once we're married.

MAN. It's a pity—there's never enough roses in the world, not even in June.

GIRL. [*Suddenly rousing herself.*] Oh, Mercy me, if I haven't gone an' let another pan o' cookies go up in smoke. [*She runs to oven and takes them out guiltily.*] I never did burn two whole pans in all my life before!

MAN. [*Watching her take them out.*] I'm thinkin' they're past hope, even for the likes o' my stomach!

GIRL. [*Throwing the panful into fire.*] The Widow Boggs'd scold me for a week steady if she smelt 'em. [*She returns to table and rolls out more.*]

MAN. [*Touching her hand as she rolls dough.*] Let you be turnin' over your palm an' I'll tell your fortune for you. [GIRL, *starts to do so, then draws back.* MAN *begins coaxing her.*] Come now, 'twon't cost you a penny

an' you needn't be afraid. I can see it's a fine one you'll be having.

GIRL. [*Hesitating.*] 'Tisn't that, Mister, it's the Widow Boggs an' Hiram. They don't believe in tellin' fortunes. They say it's wicked an' bad as breakin' a commandment.

MAN. An' who are they to be passin' Judgment the same as the Lord God himself?

GIRL. [*Nervously.*] Oh, you hadn't ought to be so blasphemous.

MAN. Lord bless me, what do you want me to say?

GIRL. You could just say—"Bless me."

MAN. Well, bless me, then, give over your little floury paw.

GIRL. [*Doing so half fearfully.*] Can you see it all there, plain as in writin'?

MAN. [*Bending over it.*] Plainer nor writin' it is, Rose Martha, an' there's a long life here an' a happy one an' a marriage— [*he darts her a quick look which she is too absorbed to note*] with a dark thin sort of a man.

GIRL. [*Softly to herself.*] That's queer. Hiram's short an' square an' what hair he has is light.

MAN. [*Going on with renewed vigor.*] But that's not the half of what I'm seeing. There's travel here, an' the roads of all the world from white May to red October. An' you walkin' of them with the dark man by your side an' there's music an' the dancin' of many feet——

GIRL. [*Nervously.*] But, Mister, supposin' that—that I was to marry a fairish man.

MAN. [*Stubbornly.*] I see it written plain—you'll be mating with a dark man.

GIRL. But how can it be when Hi——

MAN. [*Breaking in.*] You can't be askin' a how and a why of Fate. Those were my Grannie's very words to

me an' she tellin' me a strange fortune of a land across the sea an' a girl with hair like little flames an' as many freckles as there are stars on the Milky Way.

GIRL. [*Startled.*] Did she tell you that?

MAN. She did, an' more beside. "There'll be the sound of flowers in her name, Lad," my old Grannie said, "an' a plain bit of a thorny one too, so you'll be makin' no mistake. [*He watches the effect of this upon her and seems pleased. Suddenly he drops her hand, draws her to him and kisses her full on the mouth.*]

GIRL. [*Faintly as he lets her go.*] Oh, Mister, Oh.

MAN. [*Watching her with shining eyes.*] Look at me, Bound-Girl, have they kept you shut up in their four walls so long you can't be tellin' love when you're meetin' with it?

GIRL. [*Faltering.*] I'm—frightened, Mister.

MAN. I wouldn't be harmin' a hair o' your head, an' every one a candle to light you to Paradise.

GIRL. 'Tain't you I'm scared of—it's *Me.* [*Low.*] I'm feelin' things that I hadn't ought to feel—not with me an' Hiram cried three times aready in Meetin'. [*She looks at him beseechingly, but with growing emotion.*]

MAN. [*Catching her hands and speaking with sudden contrition.*] Listen to me well, Colleen, maybe I didn't be tellin' you all I saw. There's cold an' hunger written there, too, for a road can be a lonesome dark place an' you a long way from any lighted door—an' maybe then they'll be shutting it in your face. An' you not growing young with the years.

GIRL. [*Slowly.*] But everybody grows old sometime, don't they, Mister?

MAN. [*Drawing her closer to him.*] I couldn't be denyin' that, an' I wouldn't be changing the road for the finest farm in your county or a grand house in Boston or Philadelphia.

GIRL. [*Hesitating.*] But supposin' you get hungry, Mister?

MAN. [*Significantly.*] An' empty belly's a hard thing, but it's nothin' to a heart that's never had it's fill o' love.

GIRL. [*Still objecting, though nearly won over.*] An' there's winter comin' on.

MAN. [*Twinkling.*] Sure, an' I wouldn't be above takin' a hint or two from the birds an' beatin' my way South.

GIRL. [*Still, hesitant.*] But birds are different, Mister, they got wings.

MAN. [*Persuasively.*] We'll be following after the sun and the warm winds, Rose Martha, an' some day we'll be comin' to a village where the women have got kindly eyes an' the cattle are fat an' the barns do be full. And I'll turn my hand to tinkering again and fiddling for weddings and dances the winter through. Sure, we'll be earnin' our food an' a warm bed in the hay o' nights—whisperin' together thoughts the like we wouldn't be havin' at all in your great four poster beds.

GIRL. [*Fascinated but still doubtful.*] You're askin' me to leave a lot, Mister. 'Tisn't every girl gets a chance like mine.

MAN. [*Quickly.*] 'Tisn't every girl I'm asking to go with me. [*Wheedling.*] An' as to that I'll be givin' you gifts too—fine gifts the sort every girl wouldn't be gettin' for her marriage. The four winds o' heaven, I'll be givin' you, an' twisty brown roads, an' the sight of hills an' green islands an' the wrinklin' old sea. You'll be gettin' the song o' birds an' the smell o' flowers an' music for the asking.

GIRL. [*Drawing a deep breath.*] You do make it sound just beautiful, Mister.

MAN. [*Eloquently.*] Beautiful it is—it's not every day you'll be gettin' the whole earth offered to you. The

Widow Boggs an' her son they'll be keepin' you a Bound-Girl all your days, but I'll be settin' you free.

GIRL. [*Desperately.*] Oh, Mister, I want to be goin' along o' you, only——

MAN. [*Breaking in.*] Well, then, what's to stop you? There's a Parson in the next county will join our hands an' I've a little ring in my pack would be just the fit of your finger.

GIRL. There's Hiram an'— [*She stops short suddenly at the sound of distant approaching wheels. She darts to the door, peers out, and returns to him all agitation.*] It's them. They're just comin' over the rise o' the hill. I didn't look for 'em back so soon. They mustn't find you here, Mister, there'd be a terrible to-do, an' maybe they'd have you locked up in jail.

MAN. An' maybe they wouldn't, Colleen. [GIRL, *dragging his pack in and pushing him toward other door, the one to the house.*] You can let yourself out the front way when you hear them drive in the barn.

MAN. [*Gathering up fiddle and pack.*] Well, I'll go, for I wouldn't want to be bringing trouble on you, Bound-Girl. But I'll be back—after the fall o' the dark when the crickets do be liftin' their wee voices against the cold.

GIRL. [*Listening tensely.*] Yes, Mister, only you've got to go now, they've passed the bridge.

MAN. [*Reaching door and turning to her.*] Let yourself be choosin' between the two of us, an' if it's me you're taking, listen for the "Londonderry Air" that I'll be playin' under the sign-post where the roads meet.

GIRL. [*Urging him into the other room.*] Oh, hurry, please hurry, Mister. They're turnin' in the gate!

MAN. [*Shouldering his pack, waving from the door.*] An' whichever one of us it is, here's my thanks for the cakes an' milk an' the fine conversation. [*Exit* MAN.]

[*As he goes the wheels sound very near. The* Girl *hurriedly carries away his empty glass and pan. She returns to the table and begins to roll more cookies vigorously as the curtain falls to denote a lapse of time, some eight hours. It rises a moment later, showing the same kitchen about seven o'clock in the evening. The fire glows pleasantly, candles are lighted on mantel and table and the* Widow Boggs, *a large powerful old woman with gray hair, spectacles and a stern expression, is kneading bread at the table. Supper-dishes are piled at the sink. From the room beyond comes the none too harmonious strains of a wailing melodian, being played by very uncertain hands. The tune is scarcely recognizable in the frequent discords. The* Widow Boggs *calls out loudly in a harsh old voice as she thumps the last loaf into the pans.*

Widow Boggs. If you don't leave that organ this minute an' come an' wash the supper-dishes I'll tell Hiram to take it right back where it come from! [*Raising her voice.*] You hear me, Marthy?

[Girl's *voice from the other room as organ stops.* Yes 'um.

Widow Boggs. [*Still grumbling.*] I'll never hear it without it puts me in mind of Mis' Robbins funeral an' the trouble we had luggin' it home an' all.

[*The* Bound-Girl *appears in the doorway, flushed and curiously shiny about the eye. She is dressed as she was in the morning, but her whole bearing is different. She is all a-tingle with suppressed excitement.* Hiram *follows close behind her, a heavy, clumsy youth, in waistcoat and shirt-sleeves. His hair is pale and his expression dull*

and stubborn. At present he is completely under his mother's thumb, but he will in time become a bully.

GIRL. [*Quietly as she moves toward the sink.*] I ain't forgot the dishes, Miss Boggs.

WIDOW BOGGS. [*Crossly.*] 'Twouldn't be the first time you had.

HIRAM. [*Lighting a corn-cob pipe.*] Oh, Ma, can't you leave her be. I wanted she should try playin' some more.

WIDOW BOGGS. You must be either deef or crazy, Hiram, an' I dunno but what one's bad as t'other.

GIRL. [*Apologetically.*] I can't seem to make it sound right, nohow, but maybe when Miss Peters shows me where to put my fingers——

WIDOW BOGGS. [*Setting bread pans on hearth.*] There'll be no livin' in this house then, but o' course, *my* feelin's ain't to be considered no more—not now you've got Hiram hooked an' upset his mind so's he's willin' to pay out eighteen dollars an' fifteen cents for Mis' Robbin's old organ. Another good churn an' spinnin'-wheel would be more sensible *I* say.

HIRAM. [*Crossly.*] Oh, Ma, I wish't you'd quit scoldin' about it.

WIDOW BOGGS. [*Commandingly.*] You go out'n the shed and fetch in another armful o' kindlin' wood. This fire's most out. [*He goes, walking heavily. The* WIDOW BOGGS *covers the bread-pans with ostentatious effort.*] There's the bread set—'twas risin' all over the pans while you two was in the parlor.

GIRL. I was aimin' to do it soon's I had these cleared up.

WIDOW BOGGS. Always excuses—excuses—it's the same day in, day out, an' what it'll be when you're married, I don't know I'm sure.

GIRL. [*Absently over the dishes.*] Yes, 'um.

WIDOW BOGGS. [*Eyeing her sharply.*] What's come over you to-day? You've acted queer an' had a dreadful guilty look ever since we come back from the funeral, an' what you did with your mornin' I don't know—only three pans o' cookies to show.

[HIRAM *returns with wood, cutting his mother short. He flings the wood down noisily and stands watching the* GIRL *dry the dishes.*

HIRAM. Martha.

GIRL. [*Looking at him hopefully.*] Yes, Hiram.

HIRAM. [*Peering at her curiously.*] You look kinda feverish to-night, but it becomes you. Your freckles don't show near so much.

GIRL. You said you didn't mind 'bout my havin' so many.

HIRAM. [*Soberly.*] Well, an' so I don't. I told you I wouldn't let it make no difference in my feelin's. I was just remarkin' on it, that's all.

GIRL. [*Reflectively.*] There might be some folks would think they was a sign o' beauty.

HIRAM. That's foolishness.

GIRL. [*Wistfully.*] I 'spose you couldn't exactly admire my looks, Hiram?

HIRAM. [*Seating himself and speaking with heavy philosophy.*] 'Tisn't given to every woman to be beautiful.

GIRL. [*With sudden spirit.*] An' 'tisn't given to every man to see beauty either!

HIRAM. [*Startled.*] You do act queer to-night, same's mother said. You feel all right, I expect?

GIRL. [*Eagerly.*] Oh, yes, Hiram, but 'sposin' I didn't?

HIRAM. [*Stolidly.*] Well, but you just said you did. You can't feel two different kinds o' ways to once't.

GIRL. [*Hanging up towel.*] I can feel lots o' ways to once't.

HIRAM. [*Exasperated.*] Now, Marthy, don't you commence gettin' flighty just's you was soberin' down so good an' quiet.

GIRL. [*Sighing and coming nearer.*] But I get tired always actin' the same, Hiram.

HIRAM. You'll get over that, just wait till we're married an' mother lets me run things. You'll have all the cookin' an sewin' an' housework to do an' the children to look after. You won't have no time for fancies.

GIRL. [*Looking about her a little nervously.*] No, I guess I won't. [*She touches his arm hopefully.*] Hiram, you was startin' to tell me somethin' when you come in, only your Ma was here.

HIRAM. [*Putting his feet on bench, yawning.*] I kind of forget what 'twas.

GIRL. [*Hopefully, leaning against arm of his chair.*] 'Twasn't about love an'—an' us?

HIRAM. [*Stodgily.*] No, I know 'twasn't that.

GIRL. [*Urging him on.*] But you're sure you do love me, Hiram?

HIRAM. [*With another great yawn.*] Didn't I tell you I did? Ain't once enough?

GIRL. But I like you to tell me lots o' times.

HIRAM. [*Crossly as he fights off sleep.*] Well, that ain't my way an' you'd ought to know it by this time.

GIRL. [*Thoughtfully.*] It takes a lot o' love to make folks happy.

HIRAM. M'—m—m. [*He is almost asleep, but she bends down and kisses him. He starts up.*] Gorry, Marthy, I wish't you weren't always so sudden.

GIRL. Won't you kiss me back, Hiram?

HIRAM. Well. [*He does so efficiently enough, but*

grudgingly. The girl is unstirred by it and continues to regard him with a puzzled air of indecision.]

GIRL. I wish't you'd *say* somethin'.

HIRAM. [*Irritated.*] Can't you leave off pesterin' me? [GIRL *drops back discouraged. He settles deeper into his chair.*] Why don't you try another tune on the organ?

GIRL. I guess I'd rather not.

HIRAM. Ma won't scold no more.

GIRL. [*Moving away to stand by window.*] 'Tisn't that, it makes such a loud noise. [*With a new note in her voice.*] Did you ever hear a fiddle, Hiram?

HIRAM. Huh! [*Going on with an injured air.*] You're awful contrary after the trouble I took to get you an organ.

GIRL. I'm real grateful.

HIRAM. [*Suddenly rousing himself.*] I recollect it now—what I was goin' to tell you.

GIRL. [*Returning to him with hopeful expression.*] What was it, Hiram?

HIRAM. 'Twas about my coat there. [*He points to one hanging from a peg.*] I tore a regular barn-door in it on a nail in the Robbin's entry. I kep' my arm over it so's Ma didn't spy it, but I thought maybe you'd kinda draw it together for me now. I'll need it for church to-morrow.

[*The light slips from the girl's face. She goes over to the peg and takes down the coat, but there is a defiant set to her shoulders and a new firmness to her walk.*

GIRL. [*Carrying it to the table.*] All right, Hiram, I'll mend it for you.

[*She takes up her work-basket and begins to sew quickly, with every now and then a look toward the dark window.* HIRAM *settles back comfortably with another enormous yawn. His eyes are*

shut. There is a pause in which the crickets outside may be heard chirping loudly.

HIRAM. [*Sleepily.*] I'll be glad when those pesky crickets let up their everlastin' hollerin' out there.

GIRL. [*With a reminiscent note in her voice.*] I like to hear 'em—singing against the cold.

HIRAM. Wish 'twould come an' freeze every last one of 'em.

GIRL. [*Quickly.*] No—no. [*There is a hint of horror in her tones and in her eyes as if she and the crickets were on a new and common footing.*]

HIRAM. [*Still more drowsily.*] You be sure an' fix it so's it won't show?

GIRL. [*Bending over the work.*] I'll try to.

HIRAM. [*Mumbling and nearly asleep.*] An' you might see if the top button's on good an' strong.

GIRL. [*Absently.*] All right.

[*In another minute he is asleep. He does not snore, but his lumped body and heavy breathing tell plainly how it is with him. Martha steals a long glance at him and speaks tentatively.*

GIRL. Hiram?

[*He does not make any sign and she sighs and turns to the sewing again. Presently she finishes and sits with the coat across her lap and her head turned toward the window in a listening attitude. But there is no sound but the crickets till the* WIDOW BOGGS' *voice calls sharply from the other room.*

WIDOW BOGGS. I expect you've gone and let Hiram fall asleep 'fore the fire again?

GIRL. [*Still listening, answering absently.*] Yes 'um.

WIDOW BOGGS. [*Voice raised in complaint.*] Well, it'll take the two of us to rouse him once he's started.

GIRL. He was dreadful sleepy; I couldn't help it.

WIDOW BOGGS. No, you never can. You're the most helpless of any Bound-Out Girl I ever did have.

GIRL. [*Staring straight before her.*] Yes 'um.

[*There is another brief pause and then the music sounds faintly somewhere out in the darkness. It is the "Londonderry Air" clear and compelling. The* GIRL *is on her feet in an instant. Swiftly she carries* HIRAM'S *coat to its peg, taking her own long brown cloak down from its place and wrapping it about her. She gives a little apprehensive look toward the other room and* HIRAM, *who continues his sleep unsuspiciously. She moves noiselessly as one in a happy daze.*

WIDOW BOGGS. [*Calling.*] D'you hear that noise?

GIRL. [*She has reached the outer door and pauses there on the threshold tensely.*] Yes 'um.

WIDOW BOGGS. Sounds like one o' them wanderin' peddlers or gypsies was round again. [GIRL'S *hands reach for the door-knob. There is a slight sound.*] What you doin'?

GIRL. [*Quietly, but with great scared eyes and hand to her wildly beating heart.*] Listenin'.

WIDOW BOGGS. [*Continuing from without.*] Well, you might just step out an make sure the barn's shut fast long's there's prowlers about an' Hiram no good to us.

GIRL. [*Faintly.*] Yes 'um.

[*She gives a quick look at the shadowy kitchen and the heavily lumped form of her betrothed. Then she opens the door and slips determinedly over the door-step.*

WIDOW BOGGS. [*Voice still following her.*] You hear what I say, Marthy?

GIRL'S VOICE. Yes 'um.

[*There is a queer little triumphant ring to the words as they drift back from the darkness.*

CURTAIN

AT THE JUNCTION

A FANTASY FOR RAILROAD-STATIONS

CHARACTERS

HENRY PETERS, *a station-agent*
FRANK HARTWELL, *keeper of the lunch-counter*
THE GIRL, *from the New York express train*
THE LITTLE GIRL

SCENE: *A New England Junction in midwinter.*
TIME: *The present.*

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AT THE JUNCTION

SCENE: *A small country station of a New England town about three hours distant from New York. The afternoon of a cold winter day, with an early twilight beginning outside and dark enough for a single hanging light to be lit in the station. A big iron air-tight stove, a door opening on platform, a window and a wooden bench occupy back wall. At left is a ticket-office with small grilled window; a few dangling posters by this. Light shows from behind this and the sound of a telegraph-ticker comes at intervals. At the right is a very simple lunch-counter with the usual assortment of pies, sandwiches and doughnuts under glass domes etc. Several high stools are drawn up to it and a light from above (which is not supposed to show to the audience) falls strongly on the figure of an old man sitting reading behind the counter. This is* FRANK HARTWELL, *roundish and in the seventies, bald and spectacled. He wears a heavy sweater and an apron tied over this, and he is reading a newspaper which he holds very close to his eyes when the curtain rises. Presently the door of the ticket-office opens and* HENRY PETERS *comes out, carrying his coat, cap and muffler. He is younger than* FRANK *by about fifteen years, a smaller, more insignificant man with a stoop. He also wears a heavy sweater and winter boots or arctics.*

HENRY. Turnin' colder, Frank. Wouldn't wonder if the mercury dropped to zero to-night.

FRANK. [*Looking up from paper.*] Well, I told you I

felt snow in my knees this mornin'. [*Cheerfully.*] But I guess we got to expect it this time o' year.

HENRY. [*Grumbling to himself as he gets the coal-scuttle and begins replenishing the fire.*] Expectin' don't make your feet keep any warmer in that ticket-office. Never knew anything like the way the wind gets in there. [*He sets the scuttle back in place and peers out of the window.*] Why in thunder don't she come in here by the fire?

FRANK. [*Curiously.*] Who?

HENRY. You know—party that was pesterin' me 'bout trains to the Falls. Young one in a fur coat.

FRANK. Why, you don't mean to tell me she's still out there on the platform, do you?

HENRY. [*Looking out again.*] Yes, settin' there all alone on the baggage-truck. Hope she don't go and freeze onto it.

FRANK. A baggage-truck ain't any kind of a place to set a night like this. Why don't you ask her in?

HENRY. Because I figure a person that's able to go travelin' by themselves ought to know there ain't any extra charge to set in a waitin'-room. If she wants to freeze 'tisn't my place to thwart her.

FRANK. Still, Hen, 'twould be kind of tryin' for us if she did. Where'd she say she was goin' to?

HENRY. The Falls. Acted dreadful put out when she found she'd missed the three-forty-three there. I told her 'twasn't obliged to wait for the express. Makes me tired the way folks on expresses always expect other trains to wait round for 'em. You'd think a "local" didn't have no rights to hear 'em go on.

FRANK. [*Sympathetically.*] I know. I've heard 'em.

HENRY. [*Continuing his grievance.*] And when I told her there wouldn't be another to the Falls for an hour'n a

half seemed like she thought I'd planned the schedule a purpose to try her.

FRANK. [*Kindly.*] Oh, I guess she didn't mean nothin' personal by it, Hen. They're all like that when they miss trains. [*Curiously.*] Ever see her before?

HENRY. No, can't say I have. The Weeks' girls was expectin' company, I heard, but this one's kind of young for 'em. Didn't seem to be more'n twenty-two or three.

FRANK. There was a real young one came round last spring sellin' ladies' underwear and perfumery.

HENRY. [*Knowingly.*] Hasn't got enough bags for that. Just a little kind of a grip and that fiddle-case.

FRANK. [*Interested.*] Got a fiddle-case, you say?

HENRY. Yes, she must be pretty choice of it to lug it out there with her.

FRANK. [*Wisely.*] They mostly do if they know how to play on em. [*Puzzling to himself.*] Think she might be a new teacher for the high school?

HENRY. Might be. Hadn't heard they was gettin' one, had you?

FRANK. Seems to me I remember Saddie's mentionin' it last week.

HENRY. [*Taking up coat to put it on.*] Well, if she's so crazy 'bout the cold I wish I could send her up to set the switch for me. That Springville train's due in eighteen minutes. [*He begins struggling into his coat.*]

FRANK. Tom Sackett always used to say——

HENRY. [*Cutting him short rather huffily.*] Now don't you go throwin' Tom Sackett at me again, Frank Hartwell. I can't help it if he was station-master forty-one years against my three months.

FRANK. [*Without taking any offense.*] I was only goin' to say, Hen, that Tom Sackett always used to have a

cup o' my good coffee 'fore he went out to the switch when 'twas cold like this.

HENRY. [*Mollified.*] Don't mind if I do.

[FRANK *brings the coffee-pot forward and a cup. He putters about with pleasant hospitality.* HENRY *helps himself liberally to sugar and stands drinking at the counter as the door back-centre is pushed open and the object of their conversation comes in timidly. She is in the early twenties and a very modern city type. Between the big collar of her fur coat and the brim of her close-fitting hat very little of her face shows except her eyes. These are big and rather scared as she peers furtively about. She looks most often in the direction of* FRANK *and the counter, only to look away quickly each time. In one hand she carries a small travelling-bag; in the other a large violin-case.* HENRY *speaks to* FRANK *in a lowered voice.*

She's comin' in now.

FRANK. Glad to hear it. How 'bout a doughnut, Hen?

HENRY. [*With alacrity.*] All right, make it a sugared one.

GIRL. [*At the fire, her back to the men, and her teeth chattering a little with cold.*] Is—is there a four-twenty-six from Springville still running?

HENRY. [*Draining his cup, putting on cap.*] Yes, due in eighteen minutes, but it don't do you any good 'bout gettin' to the Falls.

GIRL. I know. I just wondered.

HENRY. [*Going to the door.*] And the New York express'll be along in half an hour, but it don't stop.

GIRL. [*Absently.*] Not unless you flag it.

HENRY. [*Half out of the door.*] That's right, but I don't have much call to this time o' year.

[*He goes out.* FRANK *continues to putter behind the counter.* THE GIRL *watches him, then turns away again. She puts down the bag and violin-case on the bench and stands warming her hands by the fire.*

FRANK. [*Conversationally.*] Gettin' pretty cold. Feels like snow.

GIRL. [*Preoccupied.*] Does it?

FRANK. Yes, I can always feel it in my knees. Pins and needles my mother used to call it. She was the same way.

GIRL. I didn't think about it's being cold out there till I tried to move my left hand and found I couldn't. [*She stretches it out to the warmth with the fingers curved, the gesture of a violinist limbering up.*]

FRANK. Better take somethin' to warm you up. How 'bout some coffee?

GIRL. [*Quickly.*] Oh, no, no thanks.

FRANK. [*Persuasively.*] I just been makin' some fresh. Don't believe in keepin' it on the stove for hours like they do in some places. [*With considerable importance.*] Might be all right if this was just a plain station, but it's different with a Junction. Folks expect more.

GIRL. [*Speaking rather jerkily.*] Yes, I suppose they do.

FRANK. It's real good coffee, if I do say so.

GIRL. I just couldn't take anything now.

FRANK. [*A little hurt.*] You wouldn't believe all the folks that have sat up to my counter and sampled it between trains. The Governor he did only last summer, and that actor that's got the big place across the river, and a violinist, too, like you.

GIRL. [*Starting in surprise with a sharp little exclamation.*] Oh, why—I mean, how did you know?

FRANK. [*Quietly.*] Hen mentioned your havin' one along with you.

GIRL. [*Relieved, but still rather nervous.*] Why, yes, —I have.

FRANK. I expect you know how to play on it, too?

GIRL. [*Shortly in a flat voice.*] Yes, I can play it. [*Suddenly she moves toward the counter, though she still keeps her head turned so she does not face the old man directly.*] I think maybe I will have a cup of coffee after all.

FRANK. [*Pleased.*] That's right. [*Brings it over.*] Cream and sugar in it?

GIRL. No, just black.

FRANK. [*A little disapproving.*] It's real cream, not out of a can.

GIRL. No thanks.

FRANK. Do you more good with cream. Maybe you'd take something to eat along with it?

GIRL. No, I couldn't.

FRANK. Everything's home-cooked. I wouldn't set folks down to anythin' I couldn't relish myself.

GIRL. [*Seating herself on the stool, the fiddle-case on the one beside her.*] It must keep you pretty busy.

FRANK. [*Leaning on the counter confidentially.*] It does, 'specially summers. My niece Sadie she helps me out then. She wanted I should let her do it all, for I ain't so spry's I was 'fore my eyes started to go back on me.

GIRL. [*Studying him sideways from under her hat.*] That's too bad.

FRANK. [*Cheerfully.*] But I manage all right. There's an eye-doctor from New York summers here, and my niece she pestered me to let him look at 'em. So I humored her an' he told me I'd got creepin' cateracts or somethin', but

the way I figure it you can't be upward of sixty without you feel it somewheres. I've used my eyes more'n most an' it's only natural they'd give out first. [*With pride.*] But I'm good for quite a spell yet.

GIRL. Oh, I'm sure you are. [*After a pause she dares to venture her first question.*] You must have been here quite a good while then?

FRANK. Thirty-seven years next June. Seen a lot in 'em too. Yes, it's a great privilege workin' in a Junction. You see life the way you don't off on a branch line. [*There is another short pause, then* FRANK *returns to his earlier tone of curiosity.*] You wouldn't be the new teacher over to the Falls High-School?

GIRL. No—I—I just came up for a little

FRANK. [*Undaunted.*] Visitin', I expect?

GIRL. [*Evasively.*] Not—exactly. I don't feel like seeing many people.

FRANK. [*With a chuckle.*] Well, you certainly won't be bothered much that way over to the Falls in winter.

GIRL. That's what I want. I want to get away from every one.

FRANK. [*Going on conversationally.*] Reason I asked you 'bout your playin' the violin just now was because I used to know some one who played on it too.

GIRL. [*A little bitterly.*] A good many people seem to.

FRANK. That so? Well, this one I used to know she can hold her own with the best of 'em.

GIRL. Oh, it was a—a girl then?

FRANK. [*Warming up to his theme.*] Yes, sir, she won't stop goin' till she's clear to the top an' she's gettin' there. [*With pride.*] I expect likely you've heard of her. Her name's Duncan—Frederica Duncan. We all called her Freddie Duncan round here.

[GIRL *sets her cup down with sudden clatter, darting him a quick look before she answers.*

GIRL. [*Hesitating.*] Yes, I've heard of her.

FRANK. [*Beaming.*] An' you're goin' to hear more of her 'fore long. Goin' to make 'em sit up in their seats an' take notice. I always said she would from the time she used to take music lessons in Springville an' set up here to the counter an' visit with me between trains.

GIRL. That must have been a good while ago.

FRANK. [*Reminiscently.*] Don't seem more'n yesterday but I guess it's all of twelve years.

GIRL. [*Significantly.*] People can change a lot in twelve years.

FRANK. I expect they do—'specially looks. Maybe I wouldn't know her if she was to walk in here right now, but she won't.

GIRL. [*With a queer little laugh.*] You seem very sure—about that.

FRANK. Well, she's got somethin' a darn sight more important to do to-night'n hobnobbing with an old man. [*Impressively.*] She's givin' her first big concert.

GIRL. [*Uneasily.*] Oh—is that so?

FRANK. [*Too filled with importance to notice her growing uneasiness.*] Yes, there was a piece in the paper about it. She's goin' to play right in New York with a symphony orchestra at eight-thirty to-night. Sadie's goin' to hear her over the Hawkes' radio if it's workin'. Maybe I'll drop round there, too, after I close up here.

GIRL. [*Half to herself.*] It's an awful ordeal to get up and play before all those people. I—she might not be able to go through it when the time came.

FRANK. [*Confidently.*] Oh, I ain't worryin' 'bout that part.

GIRL. [*Persistently.*] But some do. They've been

known to run away and hide beforehand. You don't know what it's like feeling the time's getting nearer and nearer—[*She breaks off a little wildly.*]

FRANK. Must be pretty frightenin' business. I don't blame 'em for wantin' to crawl under a feather bed same's for a thunderstorm, only there's some you'd know never would.

GIRL. I don't see how you can be so certain when you haven't seen her since she was just a little girl.

FRANK. Well, I don't know how 'tis but there's some people you do feel sure about. Seems to be the same with apple-trees—don't take many seasons to tell which ones are goin' to amount to somethin'. It's sort o' the way they set themselves to grow. She was like that.

GIRL. [*Slowly.*] You knew her pretty well, then?

FRANK. Oh, yes, you get to when you visit with a person week in, week out for more'n three years. Every Wednesday and Friday she'd come in from Springville on the four-twenty-six an' have to wait till the five-forty-nine, same one you're takin' to the Falls. I was thinkin' to-day what a pity it is the Duncan house is all closed up over there an' none of her folks alive to hear her play.

GIRL. [*With a rather significant sigh.*] Maybe it's just as well. They might get disappointed.

FRANK. [*Reminiscently.*] She was the spunkiest little thing you ever saw—used to wear some kind of a red cap in cold weather an' the way she'd hang on to that fiddle-case certainly did beat everything. Ain't hardly a time the four-twenty-six comes in, but I get to thinkin' 'bout her. Guess I must sound pretty foolish to you talkin' this way——

GIRL. [*Trying to keep her voice steady.*] No you don't. I wish you'd tell me some more—you see, I'm interested in her too.

FRANK. She and I'd mostly have the place to ourselves that hour exceptin' for Tom Sackett—he was the old station-agent, died last year. Well, she'd always get right up on that stool, same one you're settin' on an' take a bite at the counter.

GIRL. [*Slowly.*] It's queer—remembering things, I mean. You feel as if they must still be going on somehow.

FRANK. That's so. [*Growing still more reminiscent.*] Had lots of spirit to her, she had, never'd let on if she was scared, or things hadn't been goin' so good. But I could always tell. [*He smiles oddly to himself.*] Afternoons she'd ask for a doughnut or a sandwich or anything like that I'd know everythin' was fine, but sometimes she'd come in and say "Have you got an apple-turnover, Mr. Hartwell?" an' I'd know she kind of needed somethin' to hearten her up.

GIRL. An apple-turnover—oh, yes.

FRANK. [*Explaining.*] Sort of a specialty they are with me. Never can seem to keep enough of 'em on hand, but I'd always put one by in case she'd ask. 'Twas kind of like a game we had between us.

GIRL. [*Under her breath.*] I—see.

[*Outside there comes the sound of an approaching train, faint, but growing nearer.*

FRANK. Yes, I recollect when she come back from playin' in that Springville concert, time she was eleven. I mistrusted right off she needed one even' fore she asked me. [*Train is so loud now it drowns out his voice, after it has come to a stop he speaks again.*] There's the four-twenty-six now.

[GIRL, *getting up from the stool. It is plain to the audience that she has heard enough and wishes to change the conversation.*

GIRL. I'd like to pay for the coffee. It was very good.

FRANK. [*A little apologetically.*] It's ten cents, but I hadn't ought to charge you for it with so much conversation thrown in.

GIRL. Oh, that's all right.

[*She moves away to bench after paying him, taking her bag and fiddle with her. Sound of the train moving off again with much grinding. A minute later the door back opens and* HENRY *returns. He goes again to the fire.*

HENRY. [*With an air of disgust.*] Nobody goin', nobody comin'.

FRANK. Well, you couldn't hardly blame 'em for that to-night.

HENRY. [*Taking off his coat and cap.*] Why don't you shut up shop early 'fore it gets any colder? There won't be no one else along likely.

FRANK. No, I guess I'll stay round till closin' time.

HENRY. [*Going toward ticket-office.*] All right, suit yourself. [*He goes into the ticket-office and shuts the door.*]

[*Everything is very still in the station for a few minutes. The only sound is the telegraph-ticker inside.* FRANK *reseats himself behind counter and begins to read his paper. The girl remains on the bench, huddled at the end nearest the fire, her bag and violin beside her. Presently the door from the platform opens and a little girl of eleven or twelve steps in very quietly, closing it behind her without a sound. She is small for her age and should look as much like the older* GIRL *as possible. She wears a rather old-fashioned winter coat and a red tam or knitted cap. Her dress should be plaid and her hair preferably in a pig-*

tail. In one hand she has a violin-case, which she carries with the air of one guarding the crown jewels. At sight of her the GIRL *on the bench gives a start and a little exclamation of surprise, but the child does not notice her as she goes over to the lunch-counter, perching on one of the stools, her violin across her knees.*

LITTLE GIRL. Hello Mr. Hartwell.

[*From the moment she enters the other* GIRL *watches her fascinated. She never takes her eyes away from the child and gradually moves nearer and nearer on the bench. The little scene that follows should be played quietly—for what it actually is—a memory.*

FRANK. [Looking up.] Why, hello, Freddie, you back?

LITTLE GIRL. [*With a flat forlornness, very appealing.*] Yes, I'm back.

FRANK. [*Leaning over the counter kindly.*] Well, now what's it goin' to be to-day?

LITTLE GIRL. [*Gravely.*] If you have an apple-turnover, Mr. Hartwell, I think I'd like it.

FRANK. [*Pretending concern.*] An apple-turnover. Don't know 'bout that, Freddie. Been a terrible run on turnovers to-day. Afraid maybe you're goin' to get left.

LITTLE GIRL. [*Obediently playing up to her part of the little game.*] Oh, I hope not. I wanted one specially.

FRANK. [*Puttering behind counter.*] Well, I declare if there isn't just one here after all. Right in the oven, too. Think of my forgettin' a thing like that!

LITTLE GIRL. [*With a little laugh.*] Oh, Mr. Hartwell, you knew it was there all the time.

FRANK. [*Emerging with it on a plate.*] That's a nice

way to talk to an old man! I've a good mind not to let you have it just for that. Guess I'll eat it myself.

LITTLE GIRL. [*Still playing up to him.*] That's what you always say, but you never do!

FRANK. [*Handing it over the counter.*] Well, maybe I won't this time, might not set good. You've gone and got me so wadgetty, doubtin' my word an' everythin'! [*He winks at her knowingly across the counter. Then as she makes no move to eat.*] Thought you said you was hungry?

LITTLE GIRL. [*Taking up her fork and beginning without much enthusiasm.*] Well, kind of. Playing in front of people makes you sort of hollow way inside.

FRANK. [*With feeling.*] I should think 'twould! [*Leaning over with great interest.*] You don't mean to tell me this was the afternoon you was to play in the concert?

LITTLE GIRL. [*Even more forlornly.*] Yes, it was. I did. [*Trying to be cheerfully conversational about it.*] It was in the Springville town hall. There were most two hundred and fifty people there.

FRANK. You don't say! [*Curious.*] Seems to me it's over kind of early.

LITTLE GIRL. Oh, it's still going on I guess. At least it was when I left. I—I came along at the beginning. They always put the youngest ones first.

FRANK. [*Studying her curiously.*] I expect you didn't mind that a bit.

LITTLE GIRL. [*Putting down her fork, and trying to keep her voice very firm and steady.*] Oh, it was awful, Mr. Hartwell, I'll never feel the same to anything again as long as I live.

FRANK. [*Sympathetically.*] I don't know's I blame you any—gettin' up and playin' in front of two hundred

and fifty people. My knees would of just knocked together.

LITTLE GIRL. [*Seriously.*] Mine did. [*A little unsteadily.*] But that wasn't the worst.

FRANK. No? Well, I couldn't think of anythin' much worse'n that.

LITTLE GIRL. [*Seriously.*] Oh, yes, you could—I—[*She breaks off, then makes herself go on.*] They'll never ask me to play anywhere again I guess.

FRANK. Shucks! of course they will. Bet there wasn't one could do so good. Any of your folks there?

LITTLE GIRL. [*Shaking her head despondently.*] No, they couldn't come, but I'm glad. [*Confessing quickly and in a lowered voice.*] Account of my E string and everything.

FRANK. Your what?

LITTLE GIRL. [*Putting her hand on her fiddle-case.*] The E string, on my violin, you know. It broke, right when I was playing my piece. [*She draws a deep breath and braces herself against the memory.*] It was just awful. Some of them laughed, but I pretended not to notice.

FRANK. [*Consolingly.*] Guess that's the best way, not lettin' on.

LITTLE GIRL. [*Sadly.*] I wanted to run away—right then—but I told myself I mustn't want to.

FRANK. [*Curious.*] An' what did you do?

LITTLE GIRL. [*Simply.*] Why, I just got another E string out of my case and put it in and finished playing "The Rubenstein Melody."

[*The* GIRL *who has edged nearer, listening, gives a little exclamation at the name and speaks softly.*

GIRL. [*Her eyes on the child.*] You darling, of course you wouldn't have thought of doing anything else!

LITTLE GIRL. [*Going on, completely unconscious of*

any one but herself and FRANK.] I really did know it all by heart, every single note, but nobody'll know now. Perhaps Mr. Moriarty won't want to go on teaching me any more.

FRANK. [*Kindly.*] Now don't you worry 'bout that. You eat your turnover 'fore it gets cold an' things'll look different to you.

LITTLE GIRL. [*Taking a mouthful.*] I'll try, but of course I can't get the prize now. [*She takes another mouthful.*]

FRANK. [*Cheerfully.*] Never could see why they didn't have prizes enough to go round, but then there's always next time.

LITTLE GIRL. [*Eagerly.*] Do you really think so? [*Still rather anxious.*] It couldn't keep me from getting famous, could it? Of course you never read about Kreisler and the other violinists getting scared or having their strings break in public, but maybe they might have once and people just forget about it.

FRANK. People forget things dreadful easy.

LITTLE GIRL. [*Taking another bite and growing more cheerful.*] Maybe I'll go to New York to study after all.

FRANK. Course you will. Tom Sackett'll be flaggin' the New York express one o' these nights an' I'll be helpin' you aboard it fiddle an' all!

LITTLE GIRL. [*Now eating on more happily.*] And then there's Paris, France. I might get there too.

FRANK. [*Admiringly.*] I wouldn't put it past you.

LITTLE GIRL. Grandfather says it's a long way from here to fame, but he doesn't know why I shouldn't get there same as anybody else.

FRANK. No more do I.

GIRL. [*From the bench gives a sigh at this.*] Oh, my, if you only knew!

LITTLE GIRL. [*Going on, unheeding and happy.*] I'm going to practise and practise. [*Reaching her left hand over the counter.*] Just feel how hard my fingers are getting on the ends, Mr. Hartwell.

FRANK. [*Admiringly.*] I should say so, you've toughened 'em up a lot since last Fall.

LITTLE GIRL. It's nothing to how they've got to be some day. [*Putting down her fork as she finishes last mouthful and speaking earnestly.*] Mr. Hartwell, I felt pretty bad when I came in just now.

FRANK. I know, Freddie, we all get that way sometimes.

LITTLE GIRL. But it's all right now.

FRANK. [*Nodding sagely.*] Nothin' like talk an' turnovers.

LITTLE GIRL. I'm ever so much obliged. Here's ten cents. [*She begins fumbling in her pocket.*]

FRANK. [*Protesting.*] Ten cents nothin'. Don't you da'st to bring out a penny.

LITTLE GIRL. But mother wouldn't like me not to pay for the turnover.

FRANK. You put your money right up. This ain't just any day. When you get to be a real famous violinist I want to be able to sit up straight an' say: "Know Frederica Duncan. Well, I guess I do! First time she ever played that fiddle o' hers in public she come an' ate right here at my counter!"

LITTLE GIRL. [*Pleased but a little shy.*] Oh, Mr. Hartwell.

FRANK. That's what I'll be saying pretty soon. This here's kind of a celebration between ourselves, so's we won't forget.

LITTLE GIRL. [*Confidently.*] I couldn't possibly forget.

[*By this time the other* GIRL *is on her feet, moving nearer the counter as if drawn irresistibly by the child. The counter should be arranged so that the little girl can slip behind it out of sight by the time the other reaches her. This should be managed quietly, and, if possible, the audience should be so much more interested in the movements of the older* GIRL *that the child slips away unnoticed.*

GIRL. [*Tensely.*] Of course you couldn't! [*She starts toward her, leaving her bag and violin on the bench.*] I was the one who forgot. [*Eagerly.*] You've got to let me talk to you. Please listen. I didn't know till just now how much I—all the things you know that I seem to have forgotten about.

[*But during the moment when she has stepped between the audience and the child, the* LITTLE GIRL *has disappeared.* THE GIRL *stares about the station blankly.* FRANK *sits hunched over his paper behind the counter in the same attitude as earlier and the only sound is the telegraph clicking away in the ticket-office.*

FRANK. [*Looking up.*] Hello! You give me kind of a start. Must of been cat-nappin' I guess. Sorry but I didn't hear a word you said just now?

GIRL. [*Close to the counter.*] You see, I was looking for some one. Some one I haven't seen for a good many years.

FRANK. [*With a gesture that takes in the empty station.*] 'Fraid you're out of luck this time.

GIRL. [*With sudden show of spirit.*] No, I'm not. [*Starting toward ticket-office.*] It's all right only I'm not going to wait for the train to the Falls. [*She raps smartly on the window of the ticket-office and* HENRY *pushes it*

up and peers out.] What time does the New York train come through?

HENRY. [*Voice, from behind window.*] 'Bout seven minutes, might be a little late to-night though.

GIRL. [*Tensely, looking at her watch.*] And it's nearly three hours from here. [*She begins to count under her breath.*] Quarter-of-five to a quarter-of-six to a quarter-of-seven to a quarter-of-eight. Is that right?

HENRY. Let's see—[*consulting time-table methodically*] due Grand Central seven-forty-three.

GIRL. [*Calculating to herself.*] Seven-forty-three. There'd be just time to make it. [*Speaking through the grating to* HENRY.] I want a ticket. [*As he makes no move to get one.*] To New York, yes. [*She fumbles with her bag clasp to get out her money.*]

HENRY. [*Peering out more incredulously.*] But, say, I thought you wanted to go to the Falls?

GIRL. So did I, but I don't any more.

HENRY. [*Philosophically.*] Well, it's a woman's privilege to change her mind, but still——

GIRL. [*Cutting him short.*] Oh, hurry, please. I mustn't miss it.

HENRY. [*Passing out the bit of paper.*] All right, I've flagged it before and I can again, but I ain't goin' to take no chance runnin' out bareheaded on a night like this.

FRANK. [*With interest, craning over the counter.*] You got time enough anyhow, I ain't heard it whistlin' by Tompkins' Crossin' yet.

GIRL. [*Turning eagerly to gather up her things.*] It mustn't be late to-night—it mustn't be.

[HENRY *comes out of the ticket-office. He has put on his cap and coat and carries a lantern which he is lighting as he goes toward the other door.*

HENRY. [*To the* GIRL.] You be ready now soon's you hear her comin'. Won't stop more'n half a minute, you know.

GIRL. I know. I'll be right out.

HENRY. [*As he goes out of the door, muttering to himself.*] Beats all—first she comes on the express from New York an' then she sends me out to flag the next one to cart her right back. [*Exit* HENRY, *swinging his lantern and shaking his head.*]

FRANK. [*Smiling.*] Hen's new to the business. When he's worked as long at a Junction as I have he won't be surprised at anybody's comin's and goin's.

GIRL. [*Coming to counter again, speaking with a seriousness that is very reminiscent of the* LITTLE GIRL'S *manner.*] You're right about Junctions. I never thought about it before, but they are different from other places. [*She hesitates a little and then goes on thoughtfully.*] I suppose it's having so many lines coming from all directions, and—and it's being so easy to take the wrong one.

FRANK. [*Nodding.*] Yes, you do have to watch out for yourself at a Junction. [*Sound of a distant train-whistle. They both hear it.*] There 'tis at the crossin' now. Be here in a couple of minutes.

GIRL. All right. [*She starts away and then turns back to the counter again.*] I'm ever so much obliged to you for not letting me take the other train.

FRANK. [*Bewildered, but polite.*] Well, I don't know where I come in, but the Falls certainly ain't much to brag 'bout this time o' year.

GIRL. I hope you'll enjoy hearing the concert to-night.

FRANK. Thanks. I don't know one note from the next, but that don't matter long's she does! [*With pleasant interest.*] Why don't you try hearin' her too?

GIRL. [*Simply.*] That's what I mean to do. [*She gathers up her bag and the violin, holding the latter very carefully, more as the little* GIRL *did earlier. From the door.*] Good night.

FRANK. Good night.

CURTAIN

"BARGAINS IN CATHAY"

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

CHARACTERS

Miss Emily Gray, *an ambitious salesgirl*
Jerry O'Brien, *a delivery boy*
Miss Doty, *official guardian of the book department*
Thompson Williams, *a poet, also of the men's wear department*
Miss Bliss, *a lady with memories*
Mr. Royce, *a floor-walker*
A gentleman from New York

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"BARGAINS IN CATHAY"

TIME: *The present, on a morning in spring.*

SCENE: *The Book Department of Thompson, Williams and Company, a big department store in a city some hundred miles or so from New York. It is a small room set off from the rest of the store, with one entrance supposed to lead directly to the main floor, and the one at the opposite side, marked "Employees Only," leading to a back staircase. The walls have built-in bookshelves, all filled with volumes in new covers. There is a desk in one corner; several stiff chairs, and a large table centre, upon which are arranged piles of new books and magazines.*

When the curtain rises, MISS EMILY GRAY, *not much over twenty and very pretty and piquant, is busy at the table. She has a bunch of daffodils which she is arranging in a vase among the books. One of the daffodils is stuck in her own dress, a simple affair of dark material. She hums a little tune to herself as she works, and when the last daffodil is in place, she steps back to admire the effect.*

As she does so, JERRY, *a delivery-boy of about nineteen, enters by the employees' door, carrying a large package in his arms.*

JERRY. [*Cheerily, depositing the package on the desk.*] Whew! Some load on a nice spring morning! Say didn't you just hate to come in to this old mausoleum?

EMILY. [*Pleasantly.*] Well, I wouldn't have minded an hour more in the park. I brought in as much of it as

I could, though. [*She points to the daffodils.*] An old man was selling them over by the gate. Want one? [*She takes one out for him.*]

JERRY. [*Sticking it in his buttonhole.*] Thanks.

EMILY. [*At desk, reading address on package of books.*] Smith and Goodwin! [*She gives a start and betrays signs of excitement as she begins to unwrap it.*] It's what I've been waiting and waiting for. Where's it been all this time? Down in the shipping-room, I suppose?

JERRY. [*Shrugging.*] Search me! This is the first I seen of it. It ain't my fault if one of those big bums down there's sittin' smokin' on a box so's nobody can see under, is it?

EMILY. Don't talk so loud round here, Jerry. You know Miss Doty's likely to come in any minute.

JERRY. Well, let her. The old girl's nothing in my young life!

EMILY. [*Lifting out a pile of new books, which she begins to scan carefully as if looking for a special one.*] She could get you fired to-morrow if she chose to report you, and then what chance would you have to get transferred to the New York store?

JERRY. [*Gloomily.*] What chance have I got now, runnin' their fool errands at eighteen per?

EMILY. You keep right on running them and you'll get a raise by September.

JERRY. [*Striking a tragic pose.*] That's five months off and my Sweetie's picked out an emerald set in platinum.

EMILY. [*Smiling.*] She doesn't want anything, does she?

JERRY. "Nothing less'n an emerald'll do," she says to me only last night. "Then you don't want me," I says. "What you want's some guy with ears like dollar signs!"

Oh, she's a great kid. Talk about ambition—she's got it for her middle name!

EMILY. We've all got our ambitions, I guess.

JERRY. [*Grinning at her.*] Yeh, an' when it comes to annexin' a good-lookin' one who's dad owns half the business, I'll say you're aimin' 'bout's high as anybody round here!

EMILY. [*Flushing.*] For goodness sake, Jerry, don't say things like that! Some one might hear you and think——

JERRY. Everybody in the store knows he's been keen for you ever since old man Wheeler shipped his only little boy down here to learn the business.

EMILY. Jerry!

JERRY. [*Continuing calmly.*] Not that I blame him any for fallin' for you. You can hold your own in a crowd an' believe me, you're a fast little worker, even if you are so kind of quiet and *re*-fined!

EMILY. [*Smiling.*] And I've been trying to keep that a deep, dark secret!

JERRY. Well, murder will out, same's it says in the Bible! [*He grows suddenly serious.*] Honest though, I don't get him. He acts all right, on the level I mean, but any guy that's as cracked over a girl as he is over you don't mind tellin' the whole world about it.

[*He takes up her hand and scrutinizes the ring-finger of her left hand significantly. She draws it away quickly.*

EMILY. [*Lightly.*] Oh, you're behind the times, Jerry. The smartest people aren't wearing them this season.

JERRY. [*Sceptically*]. Yeh. I've noticed that. [*Earnestly.*] Say, you can't bluff me that way. I've seen you lookin' at him when you thought no one saw you. Take my

advice and put it up to him straight next chance you get. He's had plenty of time to make up his mind these last six months, an' if I was you I'd say to him, "See here, old dear," I'd say, "I've had just about enough of this watchful waitin' act. I'm good an' tired of watchin' you watch your step!"

[EMILY *has been bringing out the last batch of books from the package, and now she breaks in with a little excited exclamation as she clasps a thin green-covered volume.*

EMILY. [*Hugging it to her ecstatically.*] Oh, my, it's come!

JERRY. [*A little put out.*] See here, you're not listenin'. I was givin' you good *advice*—free.

EMILY. [*Absently, as she turns the leaves.*] I know, and thanks a lot, Jerry.

JERRY. [*Injured.*] I may look young, but I've had lots of experience if I am only nineteen. I've had girls make fools of themselves over me an' I've made a fool of myself over girls an' I know the game from A to Z.

EMILY. [*Still absorbed in the book.*] I'm sure you do. Still, Jerry, there are some things——

JERRY. [*Ducking toward the door.*] Your Boss's comin'! Me for elsewhere!

[*He turns to leave by the employee's door.* EMILY *follows him.*

EMILY. Wait, Jerry, just a minute! [*She tears a leaf from her sales book, scribbles a word or two on it, folds the paper and hands it to him.*] Don't forget, next time you're on the third floor.

JERRY. [*Pocketing the note with a knowing grin.*] I get you, my Radio Girl! It shall be his, though all the store freeze over!

[*He is gone with another grin, as* MISS JANE DOTY.

official head of the book department, enters from the other door. She is nearing forty, and a trifle hard as to voice and feature. Although she dresses in the latest style and rather too youthfully, beside her young assistant, she looks more than her age. This is a fact of which she is well aware and it annoys here. EMILY *returns to the desk and the book, surreptitiously turning the pages.*

EMILY. Good morning Miss Doty. It's real springy out isn't it?

MISS DOTY. [*Removing her things and hanging them on stand in corner.*] Good morning Miss Gray. Yes, April's a very treacherous month. One minute it's freezing and the next like summer. [*Noticing the vase of flowers.*] Did you bring these in here?

EMILY. [*Apologetically.*] Why, yes, I thought they'd sort of brighten things up a little.

MISS DOTY. [*Coldly.*] You may put them over on that corner shelf. I can't have them here where they'll be upset likely and spill water over the books. [*She lifts vase and runs her hand over the table.*] It's a wonder none's leaked on here already. [*She hands the vase to* EMILY *who carries it reluctantly to the corner where it can hardly be seen. As she does so* MISS DOTY *notes the one on her dress.*] And take that one right off your dress, please. Thompson-Williams does not allow its employees to wear flowers or jewelry. The idea is never to distract the customer's attention. Please remember that in the future.

EMILY. [*Putting the daffodil with the rest.*] All right, Miss Doty, I'll try to.

MISS DOTY. [*Acidly.*] You'll have to do more than try if you wish to remain with a first-class store like ours. When the personnel department sent you to assist me here,

they gave me to understand that you were above the average clerk in intelligence, but I can't see that it's made things any easier for me so far. [*She turns to the pile of new books.*] What's all this?

EMILY. [*Hurrying over, and always fingering the green covered one.*] That's the new Smith and Goodwin shipment. It just came and I've been checking up on the order. Everything's there. I've got those two Mrs. Crane wanted set aside. Shall I put the rest out?

MISS DOTY. I suppose you might as well. It'll keep you busy and we won't have many people in this morning, not with that millinery sale on in the basement and those men's wear specials on the third. I'm going to see Mr. Penrose about next week's window display now. [*She turns to leave and* EMILY *tries not to look too pleased at this. But as she goes* MISS DOTY *catches sight of the green book. There are two others besides the one* EMILY *holds, and she peers at these disapprovingly.*] What's this?

EMILY. [*Trying to sound casual.*] That new book of poems by C. Martin Greenwood.

MISS DOTY. [*Too cross to notice her assistant's suppressed excitement.*] Looks more like a Saint Patrick's day parade to me! [*With decided irritation.*] I don't know what's the matter with Smith and Goodwin! I certainly never ordered anything like that. It's hard enough to get rid of poetry books when they're by Ella Wheeler Wilcox or Longfellow or that Edna St. somebody—but who ever heard of this C. Martin Greenwood?

EMILY. [*Eagerly.*] Oh, he's had things in magazines. I've seen them. There was one in "The Circle" for March and in the Poet's Corner of "The Literary Lampost."

MISS DOTY. [*Unconvinced.*] Well, I don't believe anybody else read them. Smith and Goodwin have got no

business palming a book like that off on me. I'll write and tell them so. Three copies, too! [*She pushes them from her with disgust.*] You can just tie them right up again and send them back.

EMILY. [*Very much upset by this.*] Oh, but Miss Doty, it's spring and people are lots more likely to buy poetry now than any other time of the year. Couldn't we just give it a try?

MISS DOTY. [*Firmly.*] I shall not keep any books I didn't order. You've got to be firm with these publishers or they take advantage of your good nature.

EMILY. [*Desperately.*] The covers look so gay and different from the rest.

MISS DOTY. I should say they do! Bright enough to put your eyes out.

EMILY. [*Following her as she moves to door.*] It wouldn't do any harm to have them out for just one day, would it?

MISS DOTY. [*Icily.*] Really, Miss Gray, I can't waste any more time listening to you. I've no doubt you think you could run this department better than I can, but it just happens that I am running it and you aren't!

EMILY. [*Hastily.*] Yes, of course, Miss Doty, and I didn't mean——

MISS DOTY. [*Sweeping from the door.*] Very well, I don't wish to hear another word about them.

[*Exit* MISS DOTY. *After she has gone* EMILY *takes up the book again. She is plainly torn between her happiness in its contents and her despair that it must be returned. She turns the pages eagerly, then as she comes upon something familiar she smiles and reads aloud to herself with shy and excited pleasure.*

EMILY. [*Reading softly.*]

Time goes by like endless rain;
Spring will be summer soon;
Other lovers have walked this way
Under as white a moon,
And more will follow us hand in hand
To kiss when we are through,
But none will be fair as you are fair,
Or love as I love you.

[*She stops and speaks softly, incredulously.*] And he meant Me—*Me!* [*She hugs the book again rapturously.*]

[*Here a young man enters so quietly she does not hear him. He stands watching her for a second or two as she bends over the book. He is not much older than she, very boyish and attractive, but only his own eagerness and the light in his eyes betray his poetical tendencies. This is* THOMPSON WILLIAMS, *son and heir to the department store.*

WILLIAMS. [*Hurrying over to her.*] Emily, I came right down just as soon as Jerry gave me your note.

EMILY. [*Unable to contain herself a minute longer.*] Oh, Tommie, it's come! It's here in print and everything and the cover's green!

WILLIAMS. [*Kissing her after first looking to be sure they are not observed.*] I hoped it would be, but they wouldn't promise. How does it look? All right? [EMILY *holds it out and they bend over it together.*]

EMILY. It's just wonderful. [*She reads the title out impressively.*] "Bargains In Cathay" by C. Martin Greenwood.

WILLIAMS. I almost wish I hadn't called it that—there's a bargain in men's sport wear going on upstairs now!

EMILY. Of course I do wish you could have had your real name on it.

WILLIAMS. So do I, but what can you do when you get saddled with a whole chain of department stores? I might have managed with just plain Williams, but signing myself Thompson Williams would have been my finish before I began. Everybody would just have added "and Company."

EMILY. Well, I like C. Martin Greenwood and it certainly does match the cover. [*Rapturously.*] Just think of it's being every bit yours!

WILLIAMS. [*Quickly.*] No, it's *ours,* and don't you forget that. How many poems do you think I'd have written this last year without you?

EMILY. [*Modestly.*] Oh, I don't know.

WILLIAMS. Well, I do! [*A little anxiously.*] Look here, are you sure you're not sorry about the ring? I got thinking about it again last night and it didn't seem quite fair. A girl wants an engagement ring.

EMILY. [*With spirit.*] Any girl can have a ring! It's much more thrilling to spend the money on getting your poems published. [*They laugh.*] It gives me the strangest feeling to see them in print. [*She turns the leaves, pointing certain poems out to him.*] It's like people you know acting in a play, all dressed up and shiny-looking and different.

WILLIAMS. [*Kissing her again.*] You darling!

EMILY. Sometimes it scares me a little to look at them because it doesn't seem possible that I could be engaged to a poet—a professional poet!

WILLIAMS. [*Trying not to act too proud.*] You needn't be. Just remember I paid for half the printing when you feel like that! [*With forced casualness.*] What did you think of the dedication?

EMILY. Why I haven't got that far. You see I started

right in the middle on that one you wrote after we came home from that halloween ride. [WILLIAMS *has been turning the leaves and now he holds it open for her benefit. She reads the inscription aloud.*] "For Miss Emily Gray." Oh, why—Oh, my! [*She is quite overcome.*]

WILLIAMS. I'm glad you like it. I wanted to surprise you. But then I wanted to ask you about it, too. Maybe you'd rather have had something a little more fancy, and it was awfully hard to decide between that and "To Miss Emily Gray." I had it that way at first and then when I thought it over it seemed as if "For" sounded more personal some way, so I telegraphed them to change it.

EMILY. I do like it better. It's a mercy Miss Doty didn't see that page though. If she ever had— [*She sobers suddenly.*] Oh, Tom, she's going to make me send them right back, and after all that trouble I had checking the title on that order-list before she sent it and everything.

WILLIAMS. [*Disappointed, but trying to look as if it didn't matter.*] Well, I never thought you'd be able to work it with that old she-dragon.

EMILY. I don't even dare buy this one myself; she's so suspicious.

WILLIAMS. You'd better not. You've got a specially inscribed one coming to you. [*He sighs.*] I might have known nobody'd want to buy it.

EMILY. [*Quickly.*] They will too! I'd make them, only how can I if I have to send them back?

WILLIAMS. [*Gloomily.*] I guess dad was about right when he said it wasn't any use manufacturing goods people didn't want. I remember he said if he could find just one sane person who'd be willing of his own free will to spend good money for a book of my poems, he'd let me chuck the store and give me a try at writing.

EMILY. Well, we'll show him.

WILLIAMS. [*Shaking his head.*] You wait, you haven't met dad yet! [*He sighs even more profoundly.*] Lord, I wish sometimes I didn't want to do it. But it gets me—just like the drink. If it was only something simple and natural like that maybe I could get away with it! It would all be so easy if I didn't want to write. I'd pitch right in and learn to run the business the way dad wants me to and we could get married to-morrow. That's the worst of it, Em—say the word and I'll sign up for life.

EMILY. [*With spirit.*] You won't do anything of the kind. You'd hate it and we'd both be miserable. We'll just have to wait a while longer. Look at all you've done in the last year—had two poems in magazines and a whole book of them published.

WILLIAMS. Some days I don't feel as if I'd ever be able to do another—not up there selling men's wear and taking measures for coats and *pants*. [*He makes a face at the last word.*] They never call them anything but "pants" on the third floor. Why if any one came in and asked for trousers, I wouldn't know how to act, it's so long since I've heard the word!

EMILY. [*Half sad, half amused.*] I know you hate the third floor, but it can't last forever.

WILLIAMS. [*Gloomily.*] No, I'll get transferred to the furniture department or something.

EMILY. [*Comfortingly.*] Your father's bound to come round when he sees your book. [*With sudden resolve.*] Tom, I'm *going* to sell it, you'll see. Miss Doty won't be back for an hour anyway and some one's sure to come in, if it is Monday morning!

WILLIAMS. Well, good luck to you, dear; you can do it if any one can. Only remember, fair play now; you're not to buy it yourself.

EMILY. I'm going to prove that people *do* want poetry.

WILLIAMS. [*Taking another look at the book.*] The one about "Sparrows and Skyscrapers" looks well, doesn't it? Only they didn't get it quite right. I had it read —"Spears clash on blue" and they've made it—"Clear splash of blue," and that doesn't mean a darned thing.

EMILY. [*Sympathetically.*] That's a shame, but [*brightening*] you can fix it all right in the next edition.

WILLIAMS. [*Groans.*] Five hundred copies in this and not one sold yet.

EMILY. We can't tell.

WILLIAMS. I can. [*He gives her another hasty kiss and prepares to leave.*] Well, back to the sale on sports suits and pants again. Goldstein'll be raising the roof if I don't show up. I'll slip down here next chance I get.

[*He takes another look at his book and at* EMILY *and then hurries out through the employee's door.* EMILY *sighs, picks up the book and with an air of determination places it prominently in the centre of the table, the others one at either end. She plants herself near the door and waits hopefully. Presently she is rewarded by the appearance of a customer, an elderly lady with glasses and a preoccupied air. She is of the retiring spinster type, but not aggressive like* MISS DOTY *or farcical like the old maids of comic supplements. Indeed there is something very appealing about her, and her clothes, though shabby and home-made, are not in the least freakish.* EMILY *fairly overwhelms her with attentions.*

EMILY. Good morning, Miss Bliss, you haven't been in for a long time. I hope you haven't had the "Flu" or anything?

MISS BLISS. [*Absently.*] Why, no, I don't think so.

Let me see, what was it I wanted. [*She begins to fumble in her bag for a list and extra eye-glasses.*]

EMILY. [*Prompting her.*] A book.

MISS BLISS. Yes, a book. I remember now—a detective story.

EMILY. [*Trying to conceal her surprise and disappointment.*] A detective story? For yourself?

MISS BLISS. [*Explaining.*] Why, yes, you see I get sort of restless these nice spring nights. I'm all alone now. Sister Annie's gone and you can't always count on the neighbors dropping in. Of course there are the movies, but you can't go every night.

EMILY. [*Sympathetically.*] No, and they only change the bills twice a week.

MISS BLISS. [*Going on carefully.*] Besides, I don't seem to sleep very well and I thought maybe if I had something real lively and entertaining to read——

EMILY. I see.

MISS BLISS. Have you got any good new ones in? I like those about stolen gems and heroines getting carried off and rescued from gangs of crooks the best, but I don't mind a good murder mystery now and then.

EMILY. [*To gain time.*] Now you just sit down here and rest a minute while I see what we have. [*She draws up one of the chairs to the table centre.* MISS BLISS *seats herself in it.* EMILY *points to the book of poems and tries to speak casually.*] These are some new books that just came in this morning. They're not the kind you want, but you might like to glance over them. [*Handing her the poems.*] These are some very unusual poems. I think every one feels like poetry in the spring, don't you?

MISS BLISS. [*Vaguely.*] I don't know but what you're right.

EMILY. [*Pointedly.*] People who are really poets at

heart are always restless at this time of the year, I've noticed.

Miss Bliss. [*With new interest.*] Is that so? Maybe that's why I— [*She breaks off modestly.*] Of course I never wrote a line of poetry myself. No, the nearest I ever came to it was meeting a poet once.

Emily. [*With a flattering show of interest.*] Did you really, Miss Bliss? Where?

Miss Bliss. [*Reminiscently.*] In Boston one time when I was visiting Cousin Laura. She took me to a meeting of "The Daughters of Zion" or something over at her church and there was a poet recited some of his poems.

Emily. [*Leading her on.*] Oh, who was he?

Miss Bliss. [*Rambling on sentimentally.*] Why I can't just seem to remember his name. It must have been more'n thirty years ago, but he was a beautiful young man. I sat in the front row in a new blue poplin dress with black polka dots. He kept looking at me all the time and afterward when I was introduced to him he said I'd—I'd been an inspiration to him. [*Hastily.*] Of course I expect he was just trying to be pleasant.

Emily. I'm sure you must have been. [*Opening book and feeling her way cautiously.*] I suppose some of those he read were love poems?

Miss Bliss. Yes, as I remember there were a good many of that kind. He certainly did make them sound lovely.

Emily. [*Handing her the open book.*] I was reading this one just before you came in. It's rather nice, don't you think?

Miss Bliss. [*Still under the spell of her own brief venture into romance, begins to read.*]

Time goes by like endless rain;
Spring will be summer soon;

Other lovers have walked this way
Under as white a moon——

[*Her voice grows fainter, but she continues to read on in an undertone.* EMILY *stands watching her breathlessly till she is through.* MISS BLISS *looking up.*] H'm, 'tis kind of pretty—specially that part about Time. I've often thought that's how it is, only I'd never have been able to say it that way.

EMILY. [*Eagerly.*] That's what I always think about poet's too! They can say all the things people think and don't know how to say themselves.

MISS BLISS. [*Pleased to be so flatteringly agreed with.*] I wasn't sure I made myself plain.

EMILY. Oh, perfectly. [*Pointedly and with emphasis.*] Well, I must really hunt up that detective story for you. [*She goes over to a near-by shelf and pretends to look.*] Now about how much did you want to pay?

MISS BLISS. [*Hesitating.*] Why, I don't know exactly. I thought maybe I could get something under a dollar-fifty. But books seem to get more and more expensive nowadays.

EMILY. Yes, it's awful the way they're going up. You can hardly get one under two dollars any more. [*With sudden inspiration.*] I was certainly surprised to see how reasonable those poems are—only a dollar twenty-five, and with a cover like that, too.

MISS BLISS. [*Doubtfully.*] It's kind of bright, I think.

EMILY. [*Desperately.*] Well, so are leaves and grass. Why shouldn't books be?

MISS BLISS. That's so.

EMILY. [*Convincingly.*] And a book stays just the same all the year round—outside and inside too!

MISS BLISS. I never thought of it like that before, but it's true.

EMILY. Of course it's true. That's why people ought to be so careful about the books they buy and not get ones they'll grow tired of and only want to read once.

MISS BLISS. [*Eyeing her admiringly.*] There's a lot in what you say, only if a person hasn't very much money to spend— [*She puts the poems down regretfully.* EMILY *weighing her words with care.*] I was just thinking—but of course I don't usually suggest things to customers——

MISS BLISS. Oh, I'd like—I mean I enjoy talking with you. That older lady who's here, she's so short she always kind of rattles me, but you take such an interest.

EMILY. [*Drawing a deep breath and coming over to the table.*] Well, what I thought was this—maybe you could have them both, the poems, I mean, and the detective story too.

MISS BLISS. [*Hesitating.*] Oh, I'm afraid that would be pretty expensive and I really oughtn't——

EMILY. [*Eagerly.*] You don't need to get a detective book, when there's a whole *magazine* full of mystery stories for twenty-five cents! [*She gets out a copy of "Detective Stories," displaying it enticingly.*] There are all sorts of them in here so you'd be sure to get the kind you like. It would really be better, and then you'd have a dollar and a quarter left for the poems.

[*She pauses for breath and waits anxiously while* MISS BLISS *considers the proposition.*

MISS BLISS. [*Taking up the poems again.*] That's quite an idea. It would look nice on my parlor table. [*Explaining.*] It stands between the windows, and the lilacs are just beginning to bloom outside.

EMILY. [*Enthusiastically.*] What a wonderful place to read poetry! [*Nerving herself for the great moment.*] Shall I—shall I wrap them up together for you?

MISS BLISS. [*Handing over the book.*] Why, yes, you

might. [*As* EMILY *rushes to tie them up before she has a chance to change her mind.*] You're sure those detective stories are good ones?

EMILY. [*Busy at the desk wrapping the book.*] They ought to be. The night-watchman reads it to keep awake. [*Tying the string in a handsome bow.*] Shall I charge them or will you pay?

MISS BLISS. [*Fumbling in her bag.*] Oh, I'll pay. [*She counts out the exact amount as* EMILY *brings the package to her.*]

EMILY. [*Handing it to her.*] Thank you. Oh, wait a minute. [*She goes over to the vase in the corner, takes out a daffodil and tucks it under the strings of the package.*]

MISS BLISS. [*Protesting.*] Oh, you mustn't really.

EMILY. [*Smiling.*] It's all right, we're giving one away as souvenir with every copy sold.

MISS BLISS. [*Turning to go.*] What a lovely idea. [*She turns to go out.*] I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you for taking so much trouble about the book.

EMILY. Don't mention it, Miss Bliss.

[*Exit* MISS BLISS *smiling vaguely to herself.* EMILY *gives a delighted caper to express her feelings and hurries to make out her cash sales' slip and then arranges the two remaining books in the most conspicuous place on the centre table. She goes to the door and peers out hopefully. Seeing some one coming she steps back. It is evidently some one she knows and dislikes, for she makes a wry little face. For a second she hesitates, then as an idea comes to her she hurries to the chair by the table, seats herself in it, opens the poems and is apparently completely absorbed in them as a smartly dressed young man enters. He is of the floor-walker type, sleek, well-groomed*

and good-looking with an exaggerated idea of his own charms. EMILY *is aware of his every move, but she continues to read on in assumed absorption until he is beside her. Suddenly he grabs the book from her hands. Throughout this scene she is quite evidently acting.*

EMILY. Oh, Mr. Royce, you certainly gave me a start!

MR. ROYCE. [*Who considers himself very funny.*] Caught in the act that time, dearie, caught in the act! Come on what is it? "Advice to the Lovelorn," or "How She Kept Him Guessing"?

EMILY. [*Quickly.*] If Miss Doty had found me reading that, she'd——

MR. ROYCE. Yes, I know, but she's got her hands on Penrose just at present. I saw her as I came by and say, talk about "The Personal Clutch." [*He gesticulates with the book.*]

EMILY. [*Reaching for it.*] Look out, you're bending it!

MR. ROYCE. [*Peering at it and pretending to shy.*] Say! what is this anyway—some new kind of salad?

EMILY. [*With superiority.*] Oh, it isn't the sort of reading you'd care about?

MR. ROYCE. And since when did we become so high and mighty about litrachure?

EMILY. I'm not, only you needn't think I can't guess what you've come here for. [*She rises and moves to one of the shelves, from which she takes down a large book.*] Some day that "Book of Etiquette" is going to show signs of wear and then you can have a little session with Miss Doty all by yourself!

MR. ROYCE. [*On the defensive.*] A fellow's got to feel he's doing the thing right when he takes a girl out.

EMILY. [*Bringing the book over.*] Who is it this time?

MR. ROYCE. [*Trying not to sound too pleased with himself.*] Oh, just a little skirt who's dad owns the Wear-Well tire factory——

EMILY. [*Knowingly.*] And you met her at the movies.

MR. ROYCE. Well, why not? [*Triumphantly.*] She's asked me to a dance at her club to-morrow night and I'm taking her to dinner first at the Merry-Go-Round.

EMILY. [*Refusing to be impressed.*] And you want to be sure you use the right fork for every course.

MR. ROYCE. [*A little put out.*] As a matter of fact I wanted to find out whether to wear a tuxedo or a dress-suit, and whether it's better to send her violets or sweet-peas, and whether to send 'em in the afternoon or take them with me.

EMILY. Why don't you ask them up in the men's wear department?

MR. ROYCE. Do you think I want to have the life kidded out of me? Besides I've got my place to think of. Those fellows up there are awfully sore ever since I got promoted to the down-stairs leather goods. They'd be tickled to death to say: "There goes Royce; he's a swell floor-walker. Don't even know what kind of a tie to wear to a dance!"

EMILY. [*Quickly.*] Do you suppose any girl's going to notice that, if a man can—can fascinate her with wonderful words?

MR. ROYCE. Say! How do you get that way? Any girl notices a chap's tie.

EMILY. [*Sagely.*] It's his words she remembers. At least if they're worth remembering.

MR. ROYCE. Well, I notice they always listen to me.

EMILY. [*Witheringly.*] Who do? The girls at the notion-counter?

MR. ROYCE. [*Irritated and flushing.*] Oh, you know what I mean.

EMILY. [*Earnestly.*] Of course I do, that's why I'm telling you this straight. I could kid you along the way the rest do, only, well, I'd like to see you get somewhere and show them you've got something up there under the patent leather skull-cap! [*She glances up at his shiny hair.*]

MR. ROYCE. [*Smoothing it and glaring at her.*] What's got into you any way?

EMILY. I was only trying to warn you, but I see it's no use.

MR. ROYCE. [*Nervously.*] Warn me? About what?

EMILY. Why about you and this latest find of yours. Remember it's a long stretch from dinner at seven to seeing her home round three o'clock in the morning. Think you're going to be able to last through?

MR. ROYCE. [*Puzzled.*] What are you driving it?

EMILY. I only mean that the man who can talk gets the girl. Don't you read the advertisements in the Sunday papers?

MR. ROYCE. Sure, but you don't honestly believe all that bunk about the classic book-shelf, do you?

EMILY. No, because most girls don't want to hear that kind of talk. Now if it was poetry—— [*She makes an expressive gesture.*]

MR. ROYCE. [*With a short contemptuous laugh.*] Poetry! Say, that's good! Me, talk poetry? Nothing doing!

EMILY. [*Undaunted.*] There isn't a girl living who wouldn't rather have a book of poems dedicated to her than if a man brought her a whole florist shop.

MR. ROYCE. Say, I can't write poetry!

EMILY. [*Cunningly.*] I know, and I'm not asking you to. I'm only telling you most girls like it, and as long as you can't, you could at least give her a book of some one

else's. You could write her name in the front and say how some of the poems reminded you of her. She couldn't help but be pleased if they were good ones.

MR. ROYCE. [*Impressed in spite of himself as the truth of her words dawns upon him.*] Say, you know it might work. [*He grows thoughtful.*] Specially if they was kind of sweet and—oh, you know.

EMILY. [*Opening the green book and handing it to him.*] Maybe this might do. Remember, I was reading it so hard when you came in I didn't hear you.

MR. ROYCE. [*Taking it with new interest.*] Pretty good "ad" for it, I'll say. [*He begins to read.*]

Time goes by like endless rain;
Spring will be summer soon;
Other lovers have walked this way
Under as white a moon,
And more will follow us hand in hand
To kiss when we are through,
But none will be fair as you are fair,
Or love as I love you.

[*He breaks off.*] Say, that's not so bad! [*He turns the page and reads on with interest.*]

Your eyes are blue as pools some lost tide left.

Isn't that luck, now! She's got blue eyes too.

EMILY. You could mark that part.

MR. ROYCE. I've got to hand it to you for the bright ideas. [*He takes out his pencil.*]

EMILY. And there's another one about walking in a park by moonlight. I think she'd like that, only [*fixing him seriously with her eyes*] I couldn't let you mark it all up if you weren't planning to buy it. [*She waits nervously for his answer.*] It's only a dollar and a quarter.

Mr. Royce. I'm one that'll try anything once, and you've certainly sold me on this idea. [*He pulls out some money which he gives her taking the book and tapping it significantly with his fingers.*] Personal guarantee that the goods'll prove satisfactory, eh?

Emily. [*Smiling.*] We cannot hold ourselves responsible in case of accident or bad management.

Mr. Royce. Well, I'll risk it. Here, never mind about wrapping it up, I want to mark some more of those special places. [*He pockets it.*] Maybe I'll learn one of the short ones to spout to her. [*He turns to go.*]

Emily. [*Eagerly.*] Try the one on page twenty-six.

Mr. Royce. [*From door.*] Say, if this works, I'm through saying it with flowers! This costs about half the price. So long, and I'll let you know how I make out.

Emily. Good luck.

[*He smooths his hair, settles his tie and hurries off to his duties in the store. While* Emily *is joyfully attending to this second sale, an elderly* Gentleman *appears from the other door. He is tall and important-looking with strong features, a keen expression, and conservative, well-fitting clothes. It is plain from the girl's expression that she has never seen him before and she is appraising him at once as a possible purchaser for the remaining book of poetry.*

Gentleman. [*With an authoritative air.*] Have you a copy of Harrison's "Problems and Policies of the Business World?"

Emily. No, I'm sorry we haven't it at present, but we could order it for you.

Gentleman. That won't do *me* any good. I'm only in town for a few hours. [*With some irriation.*] I particularly wanted to give it away to a young man just starting

in business. It's a book that should be on every merchant's desk.

EMILY. [*Pleasantly.*] Well, I'll speak to the head of the department when she comes back and tell her she ought to order a copy. [*As he turns to go.*] There wouldn't be anything else that you could use instead?

GENTLEMAN. [*Indicating the books about with a wave of his cane.*] These are all pretty light—not the sort of thing that appeals to me. Yes, there's no doubt the public taste is degenerating.

EMILY. [*Agreeing.*] I think so too. [*She glances down at the green book lying beneath her hand.*] The trouble is that so often people who could write splendid books just haven't got the time.

GENTLEMAN. [*Emphatically.*] Nonsense, that's no excuse at all. Every one's got the same number of hours a day, haven't they?

EMILY. Why, yes, in a way—only some people have more things than there are minutes to do them in and some people have more minutes than things, and it never seems to get evened up.

GENTLEMAN. [*Sternly.*] You sound like one of these street-corner orators. I suppose you'd like to see money and property all divided up equally, or some such crazy notion?

EMILY. No, just time. I'd like to see people have more of it. I mean more of it to do the things they want to in. Now, for instance, if a man, say a young man, wants to write—say, poetry and his father makes him work in a department store—well, you can see that that young man won't have very much time to write, and it just *can't* be as good poetry as if he'd had plenty of time.

GENTLEMAN. [*Eyeing her shrewdly.*] My dear young woman, I am not interested in manufactured instances.

There's hardly a young man living that doesn't think he can write poetry just because he can make two words rhyme. Why, they don't even have to do *that* nowadays to think they're poets. Now to prove your point— [*she starts to speak but he stops her with a motion of the hand*] not that I'm asking you to, for I feel sure that a firm like Thompson, Williams and Company does not encourage its employees to argue with customers—but as I say, to prove your point you would have to show that the young man in question had talent. Undeniable talent that others recognized.

EMILY. [*Eagerly, forgetful of everything but defending the author of the book.*] Oh, I could do that! He's had his poems published!

GENTLEMAN. [*Witheringly.*] Doesn't mean a thing. Scores of young men have their poems published every year. But who buys them? Tell me that—who buys them once they're all nicely printed and bound and labelled—like that one there for instance? [*He pounces upon the green one beside her on the table and scans it disapprovingly.*] "Bargains in Cathay." What a title! [*He drops the book.*] And I suppose it's full of this new-fangled stuff—no rhyme or reason to any of it. Oh, I know the kind!

EMILY. [*Going to shelf, takes down book and pretends to read from it.*]

Time goes by like endless rain;
  Spring will be summer soon;
Other lovers have walked this way
  Under as white a moon,
And more will follow us hand in hand
  To kiss when we are through,
But none will be fair as you are fair,
  Or love as I love you.

[*Looking up.*] That's the sort of thing you like better, isn't it?

GENTLEMAN. [*Approvingly.*] Not so bad. No, I've read a good deal worse.

EMILY. I'm so glad, because you see—well, it's out of this one— [*tapping the green book*].

GENTLEMAN. [*Irritated.*] And what if it is? I'd be willing to lay a wager that whoever wrote that wasn't twenty-five years old; that he paid for half, if not all of the printing out of his own pocket, and that you won't sell one copy in a year!

EMILY. [*Quickly.*] Suppose I should take you up on that, and it turned out you were wrong, would you be willing to buy a copy of the book yourself?

GENTLEMAN. [*Taken aback.*] Well, really this is about the most— [*He breaks off and studies her shrewdly.*] How long have you been with Thompson, Williams and Company, may I ask?

EMILY. Nearly a year.

GENTLEMAN. [*With some heat.*] And do you mean to tell me that in a year you haven't learned that it isn't the place of employees to lay bets with customers—especially customers of—of the opposite sex?

EMILY. [*Apologetically.*] Well, but you suggested it. I never would have thought of it myself.

GENTLEMAN. [*With dignity.*] I'm sure no one could call me narrow-minded or undemocratic, but I do draw the line at some things!

EMILY. [*Thoughtfully.*] It's too bad because now you'll never know whether you're right or not.

GENTLEMAN. I know I'm right!

EMILY. [*Persistently.*] Then I don't see why you'd mind, if you're so sure you wouldn't lose anything by it?

GENTLEMAN. It's past belief. [*He takes out his hand-*

kerchief and nervously mops his face.] Never in all my experience! [*He breaks off and turns to* EMILY *again.*] Well, and suppose I should do as you say, what about *my* points? Can you deny that the author of that ridiculous book is over twenty-five?

EMILY. [*Calmly.*] I don't deny it. He's twenty-three.

GENTLEMAN. [*With satisfaction.*] And that he paid for publishing that stuff himself?

EMILY. He paid for half of it, yes.

GENTLEMAN. [*Turning on her.*] And as to selling it in a year—you may not be in any position to know by that time!

EMILY. [*Scared but keeping up her spirit.*] Well, I just wanted to tell you that you've lost on that last part. [*She holds the books out challengingly to him.*] "Bargains in Cathay" just came in this morning. It isn't an hour since I put them out on this table. There were three of them then, and now [*she cannot resist a scared but triumphant smile*], well, you can see for yourself they're all sold! [*She puts it in his hand.*] It's a dollar and a quarter, so you see it's a real bargain.

GENTLEMAN. [*Staring at her dumfounded.*] Well, I'll be damned!

[*At this moment* MISS DOTY *appears. She takes one look at the customer, gives a little gasp, and sweeping* EMILY *to one side, places herself before him all smiles and apologies.*

MISS DOTY. Oh, Mr. Williams! [EMILY, *at the name, drops her cash-book and pencil and makes a queer sound in her throat.*] I'm so sorry I wasn't here when you came, but I was called away for a few minutes on very important business. I do hope you've had your wants attended to. [*Signalling* EMILY *to pick up her pencil and retire.*]

My assistant hasn't been with us very long and she doesn't always understand customer's needs, but I——

MR. WILLIAMS, SR. [*Interrupting dryly.*] Oh, I've been attended to!

MISS DOTY. [*Hastily.*] I'm afraid she isn't an ideal saleswoman. I've been feeling for some time——

MR. WILLIAMS, SR. [*Interrupting her emphatically.*] No, she's in a class by herself. She ought to be running my entire business! And I'd like to have a few words alone with her.

MISS DOTY. [*Put out.*] Why, of course, Mr. Williams.

[*He waves* MISS DOTY *away. She goes out, plainly disgruntled.* EMILY *does not move or look up.* MR. WILLIAMS, SR., *turns to her with an admiring twinkle in his eye.*

MR. WILLIAMS, SR. Well, my dear young woman, I suppose you know what you've done?

EMILY. [*Crestfallen.*] Yes, I guess I've made a pretty bad mess of things.

MR. WILLIAMS, SR. Look here, I want to get this thing straight. You say you've sold three copies since nine-thirty this morning?

EMILY. Yes, Mr. Williams, you see Miss Doty said nobody'd buy them, but I thought I'd just try.

MR. WILLIAMS, SR. [*To himself.*] And they say the Age of Miracles is past! [*To her.*] What's your name?

EMILY. Emily Gray.

MR. WILLIAMS, SR. Well, Miss Emily Gray, how would you like to take charge of the New York store's book department?

EMILY. [*Dazed.*] *Me*—you mean——?

MR. WILLIAMS, SR. I mean that a girl who can sell three copies of a book like that——

EMILY. [*Earnestly.*] I wish you wouldn't talk about

the book that way, Mr. Williams. You see it's by—well, Thompson wrote it and——

MR. WILLIAMS, SR. [*With no sign of surprise.*] Of course he wrote it. I ran into his publisher only last week and he told me they were bringing it out.

EMILY. Then you—you knew all the time.

MR. WILLIAMS, SR. That's where the miracle comes in. I knew and you made me buy it just the same! I came down here to put an end to this sort of nonsense and look at what happened! [*He picks up the book again and opens it.*]

[THOMPSON WILLIAMS *appears at the door, and hurries in.*

MR. WILLIAMS, JR. Hello, dad, Jerry said you— [*He stops short in amazement.*] Great Guns! You're reading my book!

EMILY. He's bought it, Tommie!

MR. WILLIAMS, SR. She made me! She could make anybody buy anything. That's why I'm asking her to take charge of the New York book-shop. [*To* EMILY.] Think you can be ready to come down next week?

EMILY. [*Looking at* WILLIAMS, JR.] Why you see I, I made some rather important plans first, and——

MR. WILLIAMS, JR. [*Putting his arm around her.*] I guess it's the only business deal I ever got ahead of you in, dad, but the fact is—there's going to be a new firm of Thompson Williams and Company. *She's* the "and Company!"

MR. WILLIAMS, SR. You don't mean to tell me this is the girl you've been writing me about. The one you think you're in l——

MR. WILLIAMS, JR. The very same.

EMILY. [*Breaking in.*] And maybe you don't remember, but you said once that if he could prove to you that

just one sane person of his own free will would buy a book of his poems you'd——

MR. WILLIAMS, SR. I know—said I'd give him a try at it, so I suppose I've got to keep my word, though God knows no man's sanity is safe when a girl like that gets hold of him, and as for "Free Will." [*He gestures expressively with his hands.*]

MR. WILLIAMS, JR. [*Going to him with outstretched hands.*] Dad, you're just——

MR. WILLIAMS, SR. [*Waving him away.*] All right, all right, but get back to the third floor again. I can't have you leaving in the middle of the morning, and with a bargain sale on too. [*He looks at his watch and prepares to go.*] You and Miss Gray meet me for lunch at one o'clock. We can talk things over then.

[*He walks away, but* EMILY *runs after him, holding out the book which he has left on the table.*

EMILY. Please, Mr. Williams, you were forgetting your book. [*Smiling up at him, but managing to preserve her most business-like manner.*] And shall I charge it or will you pay?

MR. WILLIAMS, SR. [*With another chuckle.*] Well, I'll be damned! [*Beginning to feel in his pocket.*] Oh, I'll *pay!*

CURTAIN

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